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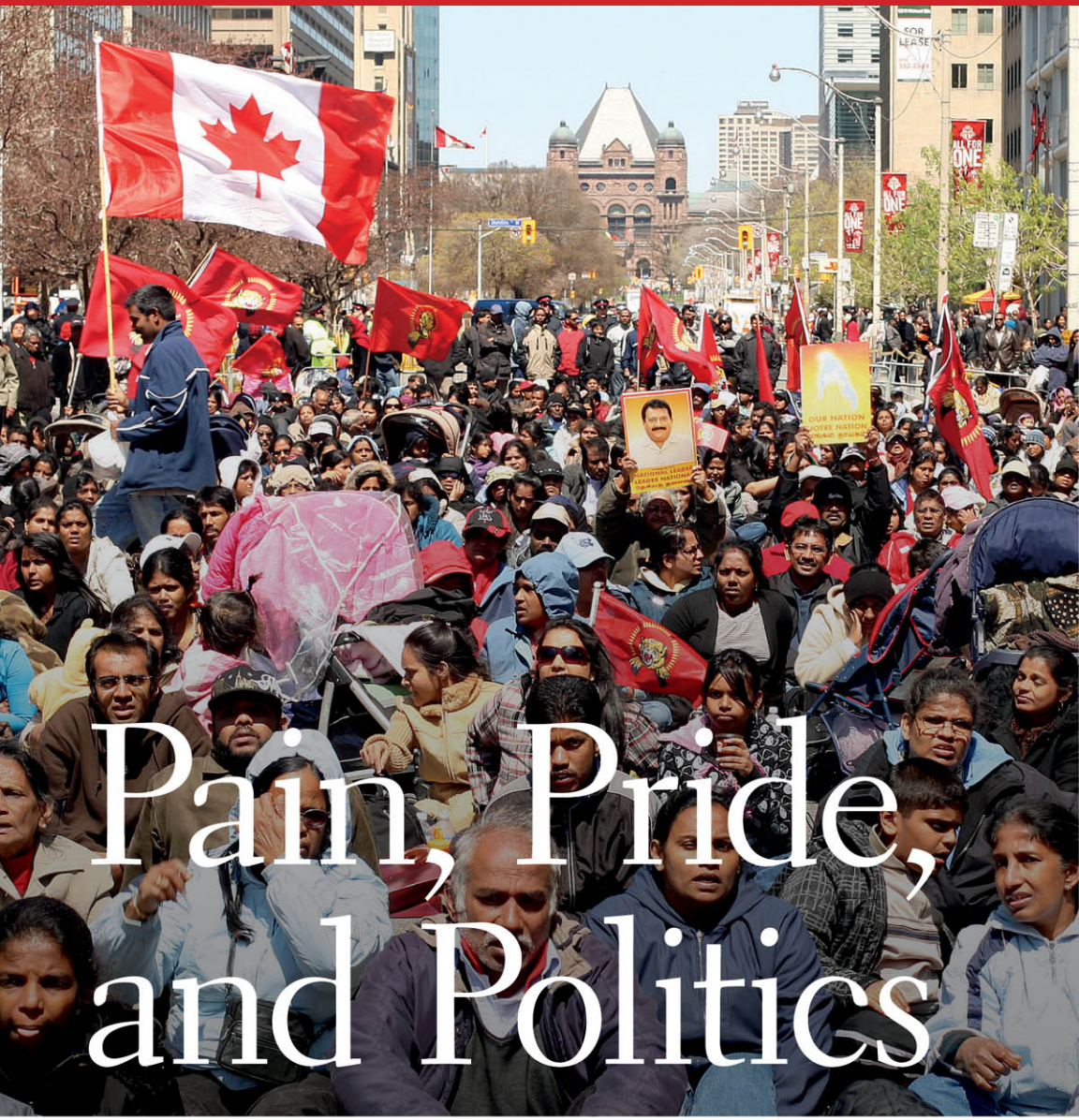

Pain, Pride, and Politics

SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTIVISM AND THE SRI LANKAN TAMIL DIASPORA IN CANADA

AMARNATH AMARASINGAM

VISIT…

Pain, Pride, and Politics

GEOGRAPHIES OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Pain, Pride, and Politics

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INTRODUCTION

One day in the early 1990s as I was arriving home from school, I took the elevator up to my family's apartment in Toronto and saw two nondescript men at our front door. They looked as if they had been knocking for quite a while and were growing increasingly irritated that no one was answering. I was surprised, as I knew my parents were home. I walked around the men and fumbled around for my keys. "Who are you?" they asked. "I think the question is, who are you?" I responded, young tough guy that I was. As I opened the door and walked in, my parents also came to the front door, presumably hearing the quasi argument taking place. "We would like to talk to you—can we come in?" asked one of the men. "We have no money. It's pretty tough these days," my parents replied, apparently already aware that these men were collecting money for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). They stood at the front door and asked to come inside for such a long time that my parents eventually relented. The two men came inside and, while seated on our couch, explained their presence: the Tamil Tiger leadership needed our help, they said, and they would like us to make a small donation, perhaps even a monthly commitment.

By the 1990s, as will be examined in chapter 1, the LTTE, or the Tamil Tigers, had been waging a war for an independent Tamil state, known as Tamil Eelam, carved out of the North and East of Sri Lanka, for several years. Their separatist demand, one that arose from the historic discrimination against Tamils in Sri Lanka and a failure of the state to give the community equal rights, was embraced by many Tamils in the diaspora, and what has come to be called the "international network" of the LTTE proliferated. The two men sitting in my family's living room that day asking my parents for a donation represented one face of this budding network. When my parents responded once again that they "had little money these days," the men went on their way, presumably down the hallway of our apartment building to the next Tamil home.

Another, more frightening incident, one that reflects the strategies of intimidation at times prevalent while the LTTE was present in the Tamil diaspora, occurred at what was then my father's moderately successful furniture store in Toronto's east end. At the time, members of this international network operated a widely circulated Tamil business directory for which Tamil businesses would pay a small fee to have a half-page advertisement placed. After repeatedly being urged to consider including his furniture store in the directory, my father finally

accepted. However, the advertisement that appeared was not to his liking, and an argument ensued. After accepting blame for a truly atrocious advertisement graphic, the operators of the directory left my father's store. As they got into their car, however, the man in the passenger seat launched a half-empty bottle of apple juice toward the front of the store, shattering part of the glass doorway. My father fumed and shook his head as the two drove off.

While many in the Tamil diaspora did indeed give willingly and generously to these LTTE money collectors every month, for others they were an ever-present nuisance—young men with big egos equipped with dangerously short fuses. Many Sri Lankan Tamil business owners in Toronto have tales of having their windows mysteriously broken overnight—coincidentally a few days after sending the LTTE money collectors away with empty pockets. Some of these store owners began to do the math and concluded that handing over a few hundred dollars to the Tigers was much cheaper than replacing storefront windows every month. Stories of such intimidation are numerous in the diaspora. There are also stories of writers being threatened or beaten, like the journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj, who in 1993 was approached by several Tamil men in front of a movie theater in Toronto and beaten with baseball bats and metal rods for, as one of the men told him, writing stories "against our leadership" (Nallainathan 2007).

The LTTE's tentacles, then, stretched far beyond the tiny island of Sri Lanka and were a constant presence in the lives of diaspora Tamils, in Canada and elsewhere. Some grew weary and concerned by their presence and activity, while many others appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the separatist struggle from their new homes in Canada. Some working-class families in Toronto would send large portions of their income overseas to support the war effort. As Bandarage (2009, 171) notes, "Operating like both a multinational firm and an intelligence agency . . . out of the main centers of its global network in London, Toronto, New Jersey, and Norway, the LTTE utilizes the vast resources extracted from the Tamil diaspora and from its illegal and legal enterprises to influence policymakers, media, academia, and other influential sections in the state and NGO sectors within the international community." Based on my field research, it became clear that the Tamil diaspora in Canada did not have an enviable reputation in governmental and policy circles and is widely believed to have been overly radical and fundamentally corrosive to the prospects for peace in Sri Lanka.

The civil war in Sri Lanka came to a bloody close in May 2009, and many members of the Tamil diaspora in Toronto, Ottawa, London, Paris, and elsewhere took to the streets in month-long demonstrations. With the defeat of the LTTE, it was clear that diaspora activism in Canada and elsewhere would evolve,

but the general public, the scholarly community, and government officials were uncertain of the *nature* of this transition. It would be important to begin understanding how the diaspora in Canada (home to the largest Sri Lankan Tamil population outside of Sri Lanka itself) and around the world would react and respond to the war's end. Government officials and media commentators, accustomed to viewing the Canadian Tamil diaspora as fundamentally "corrosive" and, indeed, as a possible security threat within their own borders, due to their activism and fund-raising activities, were somewhat confused about what the defeat of the LTTE would mean for "their Tamils" in Canada. While the activities of the LTTE's international network over two decades in Canada and elsewhere perhaps justified *some* of this anxiety, these concerns were exaggerated by misunderstandings stemming from a lack of appropriate information. Surprisingly, there has been little in-depth study of Tamil diaspora politics, and many have only a crude understanding of the diaspora itself and the nature of its links to the conflict in Sri Lanka.

In the burgeoning research literature on diasporas and transnationalism overall, relatively little attention has been paid to the internal dynamics of diaspora groups in host countries. This is where, I argue, social movement research can shed the most light. Many scholars have argued that diaspora populations should be understood as living in a liminal space, away from their country of origin but not entirely at home in their places of destination. Many scholars have similarly shown that these dynamics may shift over time. As I make clear in the following chapters, transnational diasporic mobilization is at times determined and driven as much by internal organizational and communal developments as by events in countries of origin, a phenomenon that has received relatively less attention in the scholarly literature.

This book, then, provides an in-depth examination of the ways in which a separatist sociopolitical movement beginning in Sri Lanka has been carried forward, altered, and adapted by the diaspora, and the struggles that are involved in this process. Several episodes and developments in Sri Lanka and the Canadian Tamil diaspora are important for making sense of these processes, as well as for understanding the future of diaspora activism and its transitions in the postwar period. Chapter 1, for example, examines the rise and fall of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka, with a particular focus on the LTTE. This chapter's purpose is not to provide a comprehensive history of Sri Lanka, or even a thorough historical account of postindependence political developments on the island, but rather, its focus is limited to providing a detailed account of how Tamil grievances, political mobilization, and eventually armed conflict developed in Sri Lanka.

Following an examination of the civil war in Sri Lanka, the book's focus shifts to the diaspora context in Canada. The arrival of most of the Tamil community in Canada, which I discuss in chapter 2, can be traced to the pogrom of "Black July" 1983, after which hundreds of thousands of Tamils began trickling out of Sri Lanka, convinced that they could no longer build a life for themselves and their children on the island. As Tamil communities established themselves in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and Germany, an organizational presence also developed. And as Tamil grievances, political mobilization, and armed conflict progressed in Sri Lanka, the role and the nature of the diaspora would shift from a focus on settlement and livelihood to political activism, fund-raising, and international lobbying.

At the same time that the protracted conflict came to its bloody conclusion in the early months of 2009, the Tamil community around the world took to the streets. As detailed in chapter 3, the demonstrations that took place in Canada and elsewhere from December 2008 to May 2009 were a defining moment for the Tamil diaspora. The demonstrations, with all of their organizational dynamics and disagreements about LTTE symbols and ideology, as well as the emotional significance they had for participants, heavily influenced the character and nature of the diaspora's postwar transition. For many I spoke with, the series of protests, which stretched out over months, became sites of socialization, as individuals came to learn about Tamil grievances and the civil war, often for the first time, after deciding to participate. The length and intensity of the demonstrations also instilled in the community a renewed sense of ownership over the "liberation struggle" in Sri Lanka, and a variety of new organizations began appearing months after the end of military hostilities. These organizations, examined in chapters 2 and 4, were diverse in their makeup and political ideology but seemed to agree on one thing: that the diaspora has a renewed responsibility to address the plight of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, now that the war is over and the LTTE was roundly defeated. I focus particular attention on the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), because it seems to encapsulate several key organizational dynamics occurring in the postwar period, such as leadership rivalries, bureaucratization, and transnational activism. I do not wish to suggest that somehow the TGTE is the most important organization that has arisen in the postwar period. Rather, the organization neatly sheds light on some of the broader trends, organizationally and communally, occurring in the Tamil diaspora.

A significant majority of those who participated in the demonstrations in late 2008 and past the end of the war were Tamil youth. The last chapter of the book examines youth identity in detail, with a focus on the often wide-ranging

views of Tamil youth in Canada with respect to the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, and Tamil Eelam, as well as the role of the diaspora in postwar Sri Lanka. As this chapter demonstrates, while the Tamil diaspora is often viewed as a homogenous bloc—with little variance in its die-hard support for the LTTE and its separatist platform—the opposite is in fact true. Indeed, an accurate understanding of the Tamil diaspora, in Canada and elsewhere, must take into account its profound heterogeneity and the diverging opinions of people in the diaspora about the LTTE, militancy, human rights, and the role of the diaspora community in postwar Sri Lanka.

Even though *Pain, Pride, and Politics* is the first book-length treatment of Tamil diaspora politics in Canada, no attempt is made to provide an exhaustive treatment of the community as a whole, exploring intergenerational religious identity, the proliferation of temples and ethnic Tamil churches in Ontario, debates about caste identity, refugee experiences, mental health issues affecting the Tamil community, gang violence, and so on (Ranganathan 2010; Clothey 2006; Sekar 2001; S. Balasingham 2000; Fuglerud 1999; McDowell 1996). Rather, this book looks closely at Tamil diaspora politics in Canada and the nature of its transition following the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka. In doing so, the book also attempts to fill two broader gaps in the research literature.

First, much of the literature on diaspora politics examines diaspora communities as either peacemakers or troublemakers in relation to conflicts in their country of origin. This kind of academic dichotomization is too constraining, as it does not provide the research tools needed to examine diaspora activism in its own right, with its own internal dynamics and deliberations. Second, in setting out to address this issue, the cross-fertilization of diaspora studies with the extensive literature in the field of social movement theory is particularly useful. As I argue below, diasporas are perhaps best thought of as mobilized entities, and so social movement literature can provide the theoretical tools needed to better understand the demonstrations, the organizational dynamics, and the process of social movement identity formation in the postwar Sri Lankan Tamil community.

Diaspora Activism: Peacemaking or Troublemaking?

Diaspora communities have often been discussed in the scholarly literature as either peacemakers or troublemakers (Pirkkalainen and Abdile 2009; Lyon and Uçarer 2001). In a widely cited comment on diaspora activism, Benedict Anderson (1992) criticized "long-distance nationalists" for perpetuating, from

the safety and comfort of their new homeland, conflict and divisiveness in the country they left behind (see also Geislerova 2007). Long-distance nationalists, according to Anderson, do not suffer any long-distance consequences brought about by their actions. They enjoy the warm and fuzzy satisfaction of "fighting for the people back home" while having to experience virtually none of the economic, social, or political backlash from the state.

Needless to say, Anderson has been roundly criticized for painting diasporic nationalism and transnational activism with such broad brushstrokes and failing to understand that individuals engage in the politics of their homeland for a variety of reasons, including the fact that their friends and family may be directly affected by the conflict. Writing specifically about the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, Luxshi Vimalarajah and R. Cheran (2010, 16) rightly point out, "To say that the Tamil Diaspora does not have to carry the costs of its long-distance politics is short sighted. It also trivializes the pain and trauma of thousands of diaspora Tamils whose family members and relatives have perished in large numbers in the last few months of the war." Further, far from "playing" identity politics, individuals find that their histories and experiences of persecution and migration intimately tie their very identity to the country they left behind. As ties to the homeland are stripped away by the refugee experience, individuals often do not so much make *conscious decisions* to be involved in the politics of their homeland. Rather, involvement may simply be an expected expression of their identity.

While diasporas are an important element of contemporary global politics (Weinar 2010; Koinova 2010; Adamson and Demetriou 2007; Sheffer 2003), the nature of their role has been the subject of much debate (Hoffman et al. 2007; Purdy 2003). The Tamil diaspora, for example, has been criticized for helping to perpetuate the conflict in Sri Lanka and for blindly supporting and raising money for the LTTE. According to successive reports by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the LTTE received anywhere between $1 million per month to $2 million per year from the Canadian Tamil diaspora (Bell 2004, 27; see also Zimmermann and Rosenau 2009; Hoffman et al. 2007; Romanick 2006; Human Rights Watch 2006; Fair 2005). In addition to fund-raising, diaspora leaders have long been accused of engaging in sophisticated propaganda campaigns, radicalizing Tamil youth abroad, and lobbying for the Tigers. As Peter Chalk (1999) has observed, through "front organizations," like the World Tamil Movement in Canada, the LTTE conducted an international propaganda campaign that was far more sophisticated than anything the Colombo government was able to put together (see also Purdy 2003).

Alongside an emphasis on the destructive role played by diasporas in their

countries of origin have been recent attempts to harness the diaspora and its resources for the purposes of peace building and the promotion of human rights, specifically through remittances, both economic and social (Mosaic Institute 2011; Hoehne et al. 2010; Cochrane, Baser, and Swain 2009; Kleist 2008). Economic remittances, including from the Tamil diaspora community, have helped family members in the country of origin feed their families, afford education, and pay for expensive dowries and wedding ceremonies. Social remittances, which are closer to the focus of this book, refer to the transfer of ideas, norms, values, and overall political involvement by the diaspora in their country of origin (Levitt 1998). Both the peacemaker and the troublemaker research literature will inform much of the discussion below, as it focuses on uncovering some of the internal dynamics of the Sri Lankan Tamil community, particularly in the postwar period.

Diasporas, Social Movements, and Gaps in the Research

Writing about diasporas, transnationalism, or transnational networks invariably means wading into increasingly muddy waters, characterized by definitional and conceptual pitfalls (Bauböck and Faist 2010; Braziel 2008; Cohen 2008; Chandra 2006; Brubaker 2005; Amersfoort 2004; Butler 2001; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Safran 1991). Initially, the study of diasporas was confined to the Jewish experience, but it eventually included the Armenians, Africans, Greeks, Palestinians, and Irish. At this point, diasporas were understood as "arising from a cataclysmic event that had traumatized the group as a whole, thereby creating the central historical experience of victimhood at the hands of a cruel oppressor" (Cohen 2008, 1). Then, beginning in the 1980s, scholars extended the use of the term as a "metaphoric designation for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities *tout court*" (Safran 1991, 83). And finally, in the 1990s and continuing today, terms like *homeland* and *ethnicity* began to be understood as socially constructed concepts, but ones that remain discursively powerful (Cohen 2008, 2; see also Dufoix 2003; Brah 1996).

In other words, despite the recent popularity of the term *diaspora*, what it actually stands for has become more difficult to pin down (Brubaker 2000, 1; Safran 1991, 2005). There have, however, been many attempts to delineate, despite the complexities, some core characteristics that may be constitutive of diaspora communities. Brubaker (2005, 5), for example, argues that most definitions of diaspora contain three elements: dispersion, homeland orientation, and bound-

ary maintenance. *Dispersion* is perhaps the most obvious and straightforward of the three, connoting the "scattering of people from their homelands into new communities across the globe" (Braziel 2008, 24; see also King and Melvin 1998, 1999/2000). *Homeland orientation* refers to a community's continued orientation to a real or imagined homeland that they hope to preserve and protect and with which they have a sense of solidarity. While previous definitions emphasized that diaspora communities viewed this homeland as "the place to which one would (or should) eventually return," recent scholarship on the diasporic identity of second- and third-generation immigrants, including this book, shows this not to be a key characteristic (Safran 1991, 83; see also Clifford 1994). Finally, *boundary maintenance* involves the committed preservation of a communal identity markedly distinct from that of the host society. This is indeed a key element of diasporic identity and will be a significant theme running throughout this book (Tololyan 1996). As Brubaker (2005, 6) rightly argues, "It is this that enables one to speak of a diaspora as a distinctive 'community,' held together by a distinctive, active solidarity, as well as by relatively dense social relationships, that cut across boundaries and link members of the diaspora in different states into a single 'transnational community.'"

Steven Vertovec (1997, 278), in a similar attempt to tease out commonalities within the vast swath of literature in diaspora studies, argues that three conceptions are prevalent in the academic discourse on diaspora communities: diaspora as a "social form," diaspora as a "type of consciousness," and diaspora as a "mode of cultural production." The first approach, the most common in the academic literature, has explored the social relationships (networks, collective identity, solidarity, etc.), the political tensions (i.e., diaspora as new transnational actor), and the economic strategies (remittances, etc.) of diaspora communities. The second approach to diasporas—as a type of consciousness—emphasizes a state of mind, collective memory, an individual identity, and experiences of discrimination, as well as an "awareness of multi-locality" (282). The final approach deals with diaspora as a mode of cultural production, intimately involved in the "worldwide flow of cultural objects, images, and meanings, resulting in variegated processes of creolization, back-and-forth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations, negotiations, and constant transformations" (289). This way of bringing greater conceptual clarity to the academic literature on diasporas informs much of the discussion in the following chapters.

Martin Sokefeld's (2006) use of social movement literature to examine diasporic identity construction supports my efforts to effectively strengthen the bridge between these two fields of study. The academic debate about whether ethnicity is primordialist/essentialist or situationalist/constructionist has of-

ten blocked scholars from seeing more complex forms of identity construction, particularly during diasporic activism. For instance, many ethnic communities, including the Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, engage in a kind of *construction* of primordialism through the telling of ancient myths and origin stories. Following Sokefeld and others, then, I argue that research needs to put these concepts into *motion* and decipher how identities are politically constructed in the context of ongoing social movements. In other words, such an approach "requires us to ask how, why, by whom and for which purpose such identities are deployed. As identities become politically effective only when they are employed and endorsed by a certain number of people, we have to ask how these people are *mobilized* for such an identity, how they are made to accept and assume it. Rather than being regarded as something that from the outset provides continuity and fixed structures for social life, as in primordialist approaches, identity becomes an issue of movement and mobilization" (Sokefeld 2006, 266–267).

From this perspective, according to Sokefeld (2006, 267), "sentiments of belonging, attachment to a home and ideas of a place of origin do not constitute the 'substance' from which diasporas—like other identity groups—are made but the codes in terms of which 'a' diaspora is imagined." Sokefeld simplifies the definition of diasporas to *imagined transnational communities*, which incorporates both a subjective and an objective element. In his definition, the objective and subjective criteria are combined: a diaspora "has to be a transnationally dispersed collectivity that distinguishes itself by clear self-imaginations as community" (Sokefeld 2006, 267). The approach extends ideas that much of the recent literature in diaspora studies also points out: the mere movement or scattering of people does not automatically result in a diasporic consciousness. Rather, communities may develop diasporic consciousness, even many years after the migration, in response to certain "critical events" or developments in the country of origin (Baser and Swain 2010). Sokefeld points to the social movement literature on *political opportunity structures*, *mobilizing structures*, and *framing processes* as key for examining the construction of diasporic identity (see chapter 3 for a more in-depth discussion; see also Koinova 2011; Adamson 2008; Biswas 2004; Wayland 2004). This book provides a more systematic examination of these dynamics, with reference to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Canada.

Thinking about this project in late 2009, I was told by many friends and colleagues that gaining access to members of the Tamil community was going to be difficult, particularly when researching sensitive topics like their views about

the Tamil Tigers as well as the activities of various organizations. While this was true to some extent, particularly with members of organizations like the World Tamil Movement (WTM) and the Tamil Youth Organization (TYO), I found that I was often faced with the opposite problem. Many people *wanted* to talk, and they wanted to talk because they wanted a safe environment in which to reflect on the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka and the future role of the Tamil diaspora. They felt that diaspora politics at times did not offer them a democratic space in which to freely voice opinions, unpopular as some of them might be. They wanted to believe that with the end of the war, space was opening up, and perhaps my research, along with their contribution to it, could provide a glimpse of what others were thinking about and moving toward. As such, many youth as well as organizational leaders agreed to sit down with me and, with the assurance that they would remain anonymous, spoke at length about their admiration for and criticism of the LTTE, their deep annoyance with postwar leadership struggles, and their regret that more could not be done in the final months of the military conflict.

It was not always easy, however. Numerous participants were deeply suspicious of why I wanted to speak to them at all. One notable incident involved a round of phone calls before this particular participant reluctantly agreed to an interview. I had been given his/her contact information from a mutual friend, but when I called, I found the respondent reluctant to speak and eager to get off the phone. I hung up assuming that I would have to find another participant. However, in a few minutes I received a call from our mutual friend, who pointed out that I had "spooked" the respondent and that my friend had received a call from the respondent asking who I was and why I was interviewing people. I was told to call back, as the respondent was now willing to talk. However, when we finally sat down for the interview, the respondent spent about thirty minutes meticulously reading through my list of questions, laughing out loud at some of the more audacious ones, before giving me the go-ahead. Other potential respondents simply told me that they don't "do interviews" or put forward so many stipulations about what aspects of their interview could be used and how they were to be quoted, even wanting input throughout the writing process, that I politely rescinded the invitation to participate.

Other problems emerged that are best described as relating to the insider/outsider problem. As a Sri Lankan Tamil myself (born in Mullaitivu, on the northeastern coast of the island, and having arrived in Canada at the age of six), I have no doubt that my "insider" status afforded me much access to individuals and community leaders who otherwise might have been out of reach. Many organizational leaders even adopted a kind of "proud uncle" persona,

wanting to help a young Tamil man become "successful in his studies" and "move up in Canada." However, my position as an insider also resulted in many awkward encounters with research participants, often after their interview was complete. A member of one organization phoned me several months after our interview to ask if I would edit the organization's website and newsletter, while others made it clear that "intelligent youth like yourself" should seriously consider joining their organization. It was often quite uncomfortable when I inevitably declined their offers. At times, I was accused of being a freeloader, someone who was unwilling to get my hands dirty in diaspora politics, and I was even suspected of being a Sri Lankan or Canadian security official.

Other times, after I explained that as a scholar I must remain objective and uninvolved in the organizations that I am studying, some respondents became angry or noted that they felt "used." After I refused to become more involved in his organization, one participant who had generously sat with me for two separate interviews only semijokingly stated, "I guess we have to make time for you, but you won't make time for us." It also became clear that some respondents did not entirely understand the notion of "academic research" and assumed that I was perhaps an investigative journalist who was going to write negatively about them or their organization. Similarly, my attempts to maintain a kind of methodological neutrality in my academic work, as well as in the popular press, often frustrated some in the community, who branded me as a sellout, accused me of being "unpatriotic," and/or told me that I did not care about the Tamil people. There were, then, benefits and drawbacks to my insider status throughout the research process.

My field research consisted of two focus group sessions, sixty-nine interviews with Sri Lankan Tamil youth, and sixty-one "miscellaneous" interviews with diaspora community leaders, former and current members of various militant groups, and law enforcement officials in Canada, as well as numerous hours of participant observation at diaspora events in Canada and the United States. In selecting these miscellaneous respondents, I was particularly interested in speaking to current or former militants (about life in their respective groups), members of diaspora organizations (to understand postwar intraorganizational dynamics), and law enforcement officials (to understand tactical decisions and their approach to the 2009 protests). While the majority of these interviews took place in Toronto, several were conducted in Montreal, London, Kingston, Waterloo, and Windsor. The bulk of the field research, including interviews, follow-up interviews, and participant observation, took place from early 2010 until about July 2011. However, as events in the Tamil diaspora have not stopped evolving, I continued to conduct interviews and

engage in more hours of participant observation right up until this book went to press.

While I did not collect detailed demographic information from my "miscellaneous" respondents, I did collect basic information from Tamil youth participants before proceeding to more qualitative questions. The vast majority of the Tamil youth whom I interviewed were between the ages of nineteen and twenty-six, with about 26 percent being twenty-seven or older. In term of gender, males were slightly higher in representation than females among my respondents, with thirty-nine men and thirty women. The age at which my youth respondents came to Canada varied widely, with the majority arriving at an age between zero and five years, with 20 percent of my respondents born in Canada. It is important to note that while some of my participants came to Canada when they were in their late teens, a handful of them came from countries other than Sri Lanka. One respondent, for example, left Sri Lanka at the age of five but traveled to two other countries before landing in Canada at the age of sixteen. In terms of education levels, most youth I spoke with were either still in college/university or had recently graduated (81 percent). The remaining individuals, 19 percent, were engaged in graduate or professional school or had graduated. While the views of these respondents with respect to diaspora activism will be examined in later chapters, the next two chapters will first set up the broader context of civil war in Sri Lanka and the subsequent arrival of the Tamil community in Canada.

CHAPTER ONE

The Rise and Fall of Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, formerly the British colony of Ceylon, is a small island of a little more than twenty-five thousand square miles located off the southern coast of India. While the close proximity of the two nations has meant that religious, cultural, and social influences from India have always been present in Sri Lanka, the Palk Strait that separates the two has buffered the island nation from shifts in the Indian political climate (C. de Silva 1997, 9). Sri Lanka's significant ethnic and religious diversity lies at the center of its social and political history. Of the 20 million people in Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese are the majority ethnic group, with 74 percent of the population. The Tamil community in Sri Lanka is made up of Sri Lankan Tamils (around 12 percent of the population) and Indian Tamils (4 percent), most of whom are Hindu, but with a significant number of Christians (mostly Catholics). The Muslims of Sri Lanka make up about 9 percent of the population (C. de Silva 1997, 3–5; McGilvray 2008). Smaller ethnic groups consist of the Burghers (0.4 percent), who are descendents of European settlers, and the Veddas, the indigenous peoples of Sri Lanka.

For over four hundred years, all or parts of Sri Lanka fell under the control of successive waves of European powers: the Portuguese (1505–1658), the Dutch (1658–1796), and the British (1796–1948). While talk of independence had begun in the early twentieth century, it was delayed by the outbreak of the Second World War. In July 1944 Lord Soulbury was appointed to head a commission tasked with examining a new constitutional draft proposed by Don Stephen Senanayake, the leader of the State Council, who was also minister of agriculture and vice chairman of the Board of Ministers. The Soulbury Commission eventually made recommendations that would form the basis of a new constitution for an independent Sri Lanka. The transfer of rule from the British colonial power was formalized with the Ceylon Independence Act of 1947.

The first elections in Sri Lanka, held in 1947, were easily won by Senanayake's United National Party (UNP), a conglomerate of several parties including the Ceylon National Congress, the Sinhala Maha Sahbha, and the Muslim League. Prominent nationalists like Senanayake and S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike led the

UNP and "attempted to establish an anti-communist, inter-communal parliamentary form of government" (Ross and Savada 1988). The UNP's internal differences worsened over the years, with the most serious split coming in 1951, when Bandaranaike's left-of-center bloc broke away from the UNP to form the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). As most of the previous competition for the UNP consisted of communist/Marxist parties with little chance of success, the birth of the SLFP was the first major challenge to the UNP reign.

Despite the "benevolent guidance" of Senanayake, the UNP could not resolve many of the ethnic tensions that lay below the surface. One of the more immediate problems was the "Indian question"—concerning the political status of the Indian Tamils (variously called Estate Tamils, Up-Country Tamils, or Malaiyaha Tamils) who worked on the tea plantations—which the Soulbury Commission had left unaddressed (Ross and Savada 1988). The bulk of the Indian Tamil population on the island worked on the plantations and by 1946 constituted over half of the Tamil population in the country. The tendency of the Sinhalese population to view the plantation workers as temporary residents led to restrictions on their voting rights as early as the 1930s (C. de Silva 1997, 261; Wilson 1975). By the 1930s and 1940s, most Indian Tamils had been in Sri Lanka for several generations, and according to the Soulbury report of 1946, 80 percent of them had been "born in Sri Lanka or had resided in Ceylon for at least ten years" (quoted in Bass 2001, 10). The tensions between the Sinhalese population and Sri Lankan Tamils were equally difficult to diffuse. There was a real fear among members of the Tamil leadership that colonial domination would simply be replaced by Sinhala domination, to the detriment of Tamil culture.

Seeking to address the needs of the Sri Lankan Tamil people, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC, or Tamil Congress) was formed in 1944 by G. G. Ponnambalam. By the 1930s and 1940s, Ponnambalam had galvanized Tamil political opinion in Jaffna and "stood poised to challenge the older Tamil leadership in the North" (C. de Silva 1997, 243). The formation of the ACTC in 1944 signals an attempt by the Tamil leadership to secure some sort of constitutional safeguards for minority populations in Sri Lanka. However, Tamil politics itself began to factionalize shortly after independence. In 1949 a dissident group within the ACTC, under the leadership of S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, broke away to form the Federal Party. A main point of contention was the issue of voting rights for Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka (see Bass 2012). From 1948 to 1949, three laws—the Ceylon Citizenship Act, the Indian and Pakistani Residents Act, and the Parliamentary Elections Amendment Act—disenfranchised almost all Malaiyaha Tamils, "leaving them in a legal limbo of statelessness that continued for several decades" (Bass 2001, 10).

The Ceylon Citizenship Act stipulated that anyone wishing to obtain citizenship had to prove that "his father was born in Ceylon, or his paternal grandfather and paternal great grandfather were born in Ceylon." Under these stringent conditions, only about five thousand Malaiyaha Tamils could qualify for citizenship. Ponnambalam and the ACTC strongly opposed the bill, but, perhaps realizing that he could have more influence on these matters working from within the ruling party, Ponnambalam soon accepted a portfolio in Senanayake's cabinet. As A. J. Wilson (2011, 509) notes, "He attached no pre-conditions, such as the establishment of two official languages (Sinhala and Tamil), an end to state-aided colonization of the Tamil homelands, the re-enfranchisement of the disenfranchised Indian Tamil plantation workers, or addressing the question of a national flag. His failure to resolve these issues before joining the cabinet caused a split in his party." Ponnambalam reasoned, perhaps mistakenly, that he could better negotiate many of these matters as a member of cabinet. Indeed, he likely had some input into the framing of the 1949 Indian and Pakistani Residents Act, which granted citizenship to anyone who had lived in Ceylon without interruption for ten years (seven years for married individuals). Ponnambalam's rejection of the Ceylon Citizenship Act alongside his later *support* for the Indian and Pakistani Residents Act contributed to the Federal Party's split from the ACTC.

Chelvanayakam, the leader of the Federal Party, seemed to have believed that the Malaiyaha Tamils "were the original others of Sinhala nationalism" (Bass 2009, 141) and proclaimed, "Today it is the Indian Tamils. Tomorrow, it will be the Ceylon Tamils who will be axed" (Nadesan 1993, 176). Even with Chelvanayakam's support, the Malaiyaha Tamils' lack of political power was apparent over the next several decades. For instance, in 1964 and 1974, two pacts (the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact and the Sirimavo-Gandhi Pact) were signed between Sri Lankan prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Indian prime ministers that decided the fate of all Malaiyaha Tamils in Sri Lanka, by then numbering around one million people—thirty-seven thousand Malaiyaha Tamils were given Sri Lankan citizenship and six hundred thousand became Indian citizens (Bass 2001, 12).

The Malaiyaha's relationship with the Sri Lankan Tamil population was also not so straightforward. While Chelvanayakam, taking a principled stance, broke away from Ponnambalam's ACTC on the issue of Malaiyaha disenfranchisement, his Federal Party, as Bass (2009, 141) has argued, "seemed less committed to granting citizenship to stateless Indian Tamils than using their plight for political purposes as an example of the government's anti-Tamil stance—a position taken by numerous Sri Lankan Tamil parties ever since. Sri Lankan Tamils

have often employed political rhetoric of pan-Tamil unity to get Up-country Tamils behind their views and present a united front against Sinhala national politicians." The tenuous nature of the Malaiyaha–Sri Lankan Tamil alliance was evident in the short history of the Tamil United Front (TUF), formed in 1972. The Ceylon Workers Congress, a powerful trade union that advocated for Malaiyaha Tamils and was led by the influential Soumiyamoorthy Thondaman, worked with Sri Lankan Tamil politicians in forming the TUF. In 1977, however, the TUF reconstituted itself as the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and adopted a separatist platform. As the separate state envisioned by Tamil politicians did not include the central highlands, home to most of the Malaiyaha, Thondaman withdrew the Ceylon Workers Congress from the TULF. As the journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj (1999) notes, "Tamil Eelam will not help resolve the problems of plantation Tamils was [Thondaman's] practical credo. He campaigned for the TULF in 1977 and enlisted TULF support for the CWC [Ceylon Workers Congress] in elections, but contested separately under the cockerel symbol instead of the rising sun symbol of the TULF." Thondaman later joined the UNP government of Jayewardene in 1978.

As the 1952 election approached, ethnic tensions were on the rise. The ACTC, putting its support behind the UNP, lost much of its following to the new Federal Party. The UNP once again achieved an easy victory, with the SLFP emerging as a prominent opposition party. With its profound defeat in 1952, the SLFP, under Bandaranaike, became determined to take power in the 1956 election. Bandaranaike, educated at Oxford and coming from an Anglican Sinhalese family, eventually rejected many Western aspects of his identity and embraced Buddhism and Sinhala nationalism. He brought to the 1956 election an intimate understanding of the political usefulness of communal tensions. The founder of Sinhala Maha Sabha, a movement created to promote Sinhalese culture in Sri Lanka, Bandaranaike brought this breed of cultural nationalism to the SLFP, and in his 1956 campaign pronounced the need to protect Buddhism (Ross and Savada 1988). As Richardson (2005, 144) similarly points out, Bandaranaike had discovered early in his career "that appeals on behalf of Sinhalese language, religion, culture and interests caught the imagination of people who had been previously apathetic."

Bandaranaike declared that the 1948 independence of Sri Lanka was not yet complete, as it still had links with the Commonwealth of Nations. He pushed for the nationalization of plantations, banks, and insurance companies and used the pro-Western stance of the UNP to his advantage. His wide-ranging platform allowed him to form a coalition, the People's United Front, with the expressed goal of unseating the UNP. The issue of language was also one of

the most important issues heading into the election. Following independence, it was assumed that Sinhala and Tamil would be given equal significance as the languages of administration in a united Sri Lanka. However, Bandaranaike stated that, if elected, only Sinhala would be given official status—implying that both Tamil and English were imported languages.

When the results arrived, it was clear that Bandaranaike's coalition, the People's United Front, had defeated the UNP, which was reduced to a mere eight (out of ninety-five elected) seats in Parliament. The Federal Party also emerged from the election as the dominant voice in Tamil politics, successfully defeating the Tamil Congress, which was seen by many Tamils as too closely associated with the UNP. All in all, following the election, it was clear to many observers that the conversation the country was having about itself was changing in tone and character. It was also evident that Bandaranaike's opportunism would backfire in the long run. As Neil DeVotta (2004a, 63) has argued, "Though wallowing in communalistic rhetoric was antithetical to his core liberal proclivities, vanity had deluded Bandaranaike into thinking that the chauvinists he was manipulating could be tamed after obtaining power." In Bandaranaike's estimation, the fires of Sinhala and Tamil emotion could be stoked and snuffed out at will. He reasoned that Sinhalese passions would be abated following the passage of Sinhala-only legislation. Once things had calmed, he could then seek to appease the Tamil population. It would prove to be a profound misreading of the political climate.

SLFP Rule and Rising Ethnic Tensions

The SLFP dominated Sri Lankan politics for the twenty years that followed, even while the UNP was in power in early 1960 and from 1965 to 1970. Among other things, the period was marked by a desire to protect "Sinhalese and Buddhist interest even at the risk of alienating minorities" (C. de Silva 1997, 283). Shortly after the 1956 election victory, Bandaranaike proposed the Official Language Act, which declared Sinhala to be the only official language in Sri Lanka. It would prove to be a long-running symbol of Sinhala nationalism and would solidify in the minds of many Tamils the belief that the Sinhalese leadership could not be trusted to uphold the rights of minority populations. In fact, many of those I spoke to in the diaspora, young and old, continually referred to the Language Act as a prime example of why Tamil Eelam was necessary to safeguard the Tamil community. As DeVotta (2004a, 73) has argued, "The Official Language Act of 1956 was unfortunately not a law designed for the common

good. On the contrary, its goal was to enhance the majority community's socioeconomic possibilities, while imposing relative deprivation on the minorities" (see also DeVotta 2002, 2005a).

There was immediate backlash against the Language Act by Sri Lankan Tamils, represented by the Federal Party, who argued that the legislation placed their language, culture, and economic position in jeopardy. The Federal Party launched a *satyagraha* (nonviolent protest) beginning in June 1956, during which around two hundred Tamils assembled on Colombo's Galle Face Green across from Parliament and were soon attacked by Sinhala protesters, who beat and pelted them with stones, wounding and hospitalizing many. Bandaranaike, perhaps a little taken aback by the violence, spoke to the Sinhalese crowd outside Parliament, telling them, "I will give you the Sinhalese language. Give me one thing. Co-operate with me and go home peacefully" (quoted in DeVotta 2004a, 83). But the Sinhalese counterprotesters did not stop there. Large-scale anti-Tamil riots spread across the city and to other parts of the island, leading to over a hundred deaths in the Eastern Province.

Leaders on both sides were shocked by the spread of violence, and an agreement was signed on July 20, 1957, between Chelvanayakam and Bandaranaike. According to the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact (or B-C Pact), Tamil was to be recognized as "the language of a national minority" and would become the "language of administration" in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The Tamil leadership in turn agreed to abandon its demand for linguistic parity and suspended its plan to initiate an extended period of nonviolent resistance (see, for example, DeVotta 2004a, 102; C. de Silva 1997, 264–265). The B-C Pact met with opposition from both the ACTC and Sinhalese nationalists. G. G. Ponnambalam of the ACTC argued that the pact represented a "complete and abject surrender of the cherished fundamental right of the Tamil people to live on terms of equality, dignity, and self-respect with the Sinhalese in the whole island" (quoted in DeVotta 2004a, 104). Similarly, a peaceful protest by Buddhist clergy, backed by the UNP, denounced the pact as a "betrayal of Sinhalese-Buddhist people" (Ross and Sevada 1988; see also Kearney 1978). With opposition mounting, the B-C Pact did not get off the ground, and Bandaranaike abrogated the agreement in April 1958 (for more on the Official Language Act, see DeVotta 2004a, 92–142).

Tensions increased in May 1958 when a rumor that a Tamil had killed a Sinhalese sparked nationwide riots, the first true instance of communal violence since independence (see Vittachi 1958). Hundreds of people perished, and the riots left a "deep psychological scar between the two major ethnic groups" (Ross and Savada 1988). The government soon declared a state of emergency and

relocated more than twenty-five thousand Tamil refugees from Sinhalese areas to Tamil areas in the North of the island. A first-generation Tamil Canadian who had lived through the 1958 riots recounted the incident to me during an interview in his Toronto home:

> We lived in a large house at the time, and lots of people from the neighborhood who had been displaced from their homes, had their houses broken into, and so on came and asked us to provide shelter or refuge for them. By the end of the day, there must have been over ninety people in our house. Towards dusk, our house was surrounded by a mob who wanted to burn down our house. Our only offense was that we had given refuge to these people who were seeking shelter. So I had to defend the house. I had a shotgun, and I managed to defend the house through the night.

As the rioting subsided, and in an effort to prevent similar occurrences in the future, the government passed a bill on the "reasonable use" of Tamil called the Tamil Language Act. Through the act, Tamil was sanctioned in the North and East in schools and universities, for the completion of public service examinations, and for administrative work, and those educated in Tamil were allowed to communicate in that language with government departments and local bodies (DeVotta 2004a, 119). Bandaranaike knew he was treading into unpopular waters, as Sinhala nationalists would likely interpret the granting of Tamil-language rights as a betrayal. Continuing to defend his decision to pass the Tamil Language Act, and with the leaders of the Federal Party under house arrest, Bandaranaike lamented, "Every kind of opprobrious epithet has been flung at me. Sinhalese anonymous letters have come to me [saying] that I have been a traitor to the Sinhalese people. From the Tamil point of view, I have simply ruined the Tamil race. All types of things have been said. They are all wanting to bump me off" (quoted in DeVotta 2004a, 121). His worries proved prescient. In September 1959 Bandaranaike was shot at his official residence by a *bhikkhu*, an ordained Buddhist monk, Talduwe Somarama, and died soon after (see Richardson 2005, 169).

After a brief UNP interlude, the SLFP returned to power in the 1960 general election, headed by the former prime minister's widow, Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike, the first female prime minister in the world. While some quipped that her executive experience had thus far been confined to the kitchen, others countered that her intellectual strengths had not been adequately tapped. Bandaranaike carried forward many of her husband's policies but did so with such inflexibility that ethnic relations continued to deteriorate. While her failure to implement the Tamil Language Act sparked an immediate backlash among the Tamil leadership, Bandaranaike also aggressively enforced the Sinhala Only

TABLE 1. Tamils as a share of government servants, 1956–1970
Tamils never made up more than 12 percent of the population of Sri Lanka throughout these years.

	1956 (%)	1965 (%)	1970 (%)
Administrative service	30	20	5
Clerical service	50	30	5
Engineers and doctors	60	30	10
Armed forces	40*	20	1
Labor force	40	20	5

Source: DeVotta 2004a, 126
*While DeVotta places the share of Tamils in the armed forces at 40 percent in 1956, other scholars argue that this figure is much too high. Horowitz (1980, 67), for example, suggests that Tamils probably did not make up more than 12 percent of the armed forces prior to 1956.

Act. As DeVotta (2004a, 125) points out, "Government officials not proficient in Sinhala were denied bonuses and salary increases; all public servants hired in the post-1956 period were given three years to learn Sinhala or forfeit their jobs; and, most chafing to the northern Tamils, Sinhalese public servants were transplanted north to ensure that the government apparatus in Tamil areas operated in the Sinhala language." What made matters worse was a government policy to hire Sinhalese into government service (see table 1). In short, Sirimavo Bandaranaike did little to stave off the rising ethnic tensions plaguing the country.

An overrepresentation of Burgers and Jaffna Tamils in government service between 1870 and the 1920s had perpetuated the perception that the Tamils were the favored ethnic community during the British colonial period. Although the trend started to reverse in the 1930s, Sinhalese looked to the Sinhala Only Act as a form of retribution for past discrimination, while the Tamils began to feel targeted (Samarasinghe 1984). The continued invocation of colonial injustice toward Sinhalese was echoed in 1981, when a member of Parliament argued,

> Tamils in Sri Lanka are a privileged lot. They received all the benefits under the British during the colonial days. The Sinhalese were fighting for . . . independence against the foreign yoke. . . . Even after the annexation of the Kandyan Territory, the last of the Sinhala Kingdoms, in 1815, the Sinhalese made two attempts, [one] in 1818 and [another] in 1848, to win back their independence.[1] In these struggles the Sinhalese lost their leaders . . . and thousands . . . had to lay down their lives. They lost their houses, their crops, and their land. But the Tamils in the north gained all

> the benefits of missionary education—English education—and they became heir to all the plums of public office under the British (quoted in Tiruchelvam 1984, 188).

In the 1965 elections, the UNP returned to power under the leadership of Dudley Senanayake. While ethnic tensions continued to simmer, Tamil militancy was not present—in many ways, the economic and educational opportunities available to Tamil youth in the Northern Province during this period were better than for Sinhalese youth. Under Senanayake, Tamils could also expect fair treatment when applying for government employment. According to Richardson (2005, 251), "Despite Sinhalese dominance of the central government, Tamil youth could still see paths for advancement within Sri Lankan society, where intelligence, superior education and hard work would be rewarded." These paths for advancement would be steadily blocked over the next decade, giving rise to Tamil separatism, first through party politics and then through armed conflict.

The United Front and the Rise of Tamil Militancy

In the 1970 general election, the newly formed United Front, a coalition between the Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist Party of Sri Lanka under the leadership of Bandaranaike, captured 118 of the 151 seats in Parliament. The United Front promised to work toward a "people's government," bringing wide-ranging structural changes to the country, from land reform to the nationalization of local and foreign banks. The United Front fanned the flames of Sinhala pride and promised to restore Buddhism to its "rightful place" with the adoption of a new constitution for Sri Lanka. It also attacked the UNP for its close relationship with the dominant Tamil political groups.

In May 1972, Bandaranaike and the United Front used their overwhelming majority to introduce a new constitution. The new constitution made the country a republic, officially changed the name of the island from Ceylon to Sri Lanka, and vested the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government in the National State Assembly. The UNP and minority populations in Sri Lanka were disturbed by the concentration of power that was instituted as well as the absence of safeguards for minority groups, previously enshrined in Article 29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution. The new constitution also declared Sri Lanka to be a "Unitary State," gave Buddhism a "foremost place" in the country, and made it the state's duty to "protect and foster Buddhism." It also reaffirmed Sinhala as the official language of Sri Lanka and relegated the

Tamil Language Act to the status of "subordinate legislation." Accordingly, DeVotta (2004a, 134) goes so far as to say that Bandaranaike's time in office "must rank as the most damaging rule the island has experienced, both economically and ethnically."

Prior to 1972, DeVotta (2004a, 135) continues, "Tamils in general were more inclined to blame unscrupulous politicians (both Sinhalese and their own), not the constitution. The United Front's 1972 Constitution, however, was clearly a document written by the majority community for the majority community. It had taken Sri Lanka less than twenty-five years after independence to regress from a liberal democracy to a near ethnocracy." The leaders of the Tamil community were particularly disturbed by the character of the new constitution and were unconvinced that a Sinhalese government would ever have their interests in mind (Richardson 2005, 272). In the very same month that the constitution was passed, the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress, and the Ceylon Workers' Congress united to form the Tamil United Front.

Perhaps the single most important issue that aggravated ethnic tensions, leading many Tamil youth to throw their support behind militant movements, was the matter of university admissions. As K. M. de Silva (1998, 130, 132) argues, while other policy changes would do more in the long run to cause divisions between the Tamils and the Sinhalese, "none did more in radicalizing the politics of the Tamil areas in the north, and in particular the Jaffna peninsula, than this . . . for they regarded it as an iniquitous system deliberately devised to place obstacles before them."

In the 1960s, students were educated in one of three language streams: Sinhala, Tamil, or English. There existed, then, three different sets of university entrance exams, which would be evaluated by three sets of examiners. In the late 1970s, critics alleged (although the charges were later shown to be baseless) that Tamil students, who held a disproportionate percentage of seats in universities, benefited from the favoritism of the Tamil-language examiners. In order to balance this perceived bias, a language-based system of "standardization" was introduced in which the scores of Sinhalese students were raised in relation to Tamil and English applicants. While this was initial evidence that ethnicity would begin to trump merit in determining entrance into higher education, the district quota system, introduced in 1974, made the message clear: under the new system, candidates who were from what the Education Ministry deemed "backward" districts—predominantly those home to large Kandyan and Muslim communities—were given priority for admission (Richardson 2005, 297). The district quotas had a significant impact on the number of Tamils admitted to university science programs. In a single year, the number of Tamil admis-

sions dropped by a third (for a detailed analysis of the university admissions issue, see C. de Silva 1978).

Tamil Militant Groups Take Shape

Sirimavo Bandaranaike, more concerned with promoting her Sinhala-Buddhist agenda, failed to foresee the ways in which militancy would come to reshape the nature of Tamil politics in Sri Lanka. There had been very little Tamil militant activity until after 1970, with the election of the United Front and the party's institution of policies that the Tamil community viewed as overtly racist. Many Tamil youth were also becoming disillusioned with the sluggish politics of the Federal Party. While it is difficult to precisely date the origins of Tamil militancy, an early movement known as Pulip Padai (Army of Tigers) was formed in 1961 after the failure of the Federal Party's *satyagraha* initiatives, only to fade away by 1965 (Swamy 1994, 24). Although it would be difficult to trace its precise origins, the culture of Tamil militancy became increasingly prevalent by the late 1960s. In 1969 Nadaraja Thangavelu (known as Thangathurai) and Selvaraja Yogachandra (known as Kuttimani) formed the Kuttimani-Thangathurai group, which in 1979 would formally evolve into the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), a group that had fifteen-year-old Velupillai Prabhakaran, the future leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), among its early members (Sabaratnam 2003, chap. 2).

Following the institution of the controversial new university admissions policies, youth activists, frustrated by the Federal Party's slow response to their pleas for action, met at the Jaffna Public Library auditorium and argued for the formation of a new organization to address youth concerns. In 1970 the group formed the Thamil Manavar Peravai, or the Tamil Students Union (TSU), of which Prabhakaran also later became a member (Sabaratnam 2003, chap. 3). Another early militant, Ponnuthurai Sivakumaran, joined the TSU in 1971 but later dropped out to form his own organization, known as the Sivakumaran Group. Sivakumaran would come to be seen as the "first martyr" in the Tamil liberation struggle following his death on June 5, 1974. Surrounded by law enforcement during an attempted bank robbery, he swallowed a vial of cyanide and died instantly. The death of Sivakumaran is commemorated every year in the Tamil diaspora (see, for example, Tamil Guardian 2012a; TamilNet 2008a). Prabhakaran would later cite Sivakumaran's death as the inspiration for issuing cyanide capsules as standard equipment to LTTE cadres.

The passage of the new constitution on May 22, 1972, was, as T. Sabaratnam (2003, chap. 5) notes, a "dark day" for Tamils. Protests erupted on university campuses in the North and there "were sporadic incidents of violence throughout the North and Eastern provinces. Buses were torched, government buildings stoned and black flags hung everywhere; on houses, public buildings and trees. Police went around Jaffna town in the morning and tore off some black flags. . . . Militants then turned their anger towards the five Tamil parliamentarians who voted for the 1972 Constitution" (Sabaratnam 2003, chap. 5). In January 1973, Appapillai Amirthalingam, who at that time was leading the Youth Front of the Federal Party, formed the Tamil Elaingyar Peravai (Tamil Youth League) after "realizing that the TSU had gone out of his control" and after law enforcement had arrested many TSU leaders (Sabaratnam 2003, chap. 6). While not formally a TUF affiliate, Amirthalingam ensured that the Tamil Youth League was controlled by TUF loyalists.

The fourth militant group that arose in the 1970s, and the one that would have a profoundly lasting impact on the history of the conflict, was created by Velupillai Prabhakaran. The group was initially called the Tamil New Tigers and later was transformed into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The LTTE, whose membership leading up to the 1977 elections was likely no more than forty cadres, would grow, in the 1980s and 1990s, to be one of the most innovative and feared rebel movements in the world. One of the other famous Tamil militant groups at the time was to be found not in Sri Lanka but in London. Founded in 1975 by student activist Elayathambi Ratnasabapathy, the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students organized protests in London and held demonstrations during cricket matches in Manchester—perhaps the earliest instance of Tamil diaspora mobilization. The group was also fortunate in forming early ties with more established guerrilla movements, like the Palestine Liberation Organization, which opened its Fatah camps in Lebanon to train Tamil guerrillas (Richardson 2005).

Militant activity picked up in 1975 when, in July of that year, the mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiappah, was shot and killed by Prabhakaran, who alleged Duraiappah's close alignment with Bandaranaike and the SLFP. "It was Prabhakaran's first murder, and the first assassination by Tamils," writes M. R. Narayan Swamy (1994, 56) in his study of the rise and spread of Tamil militancy. "The assassination created a sensation in Sri Lanka. It also made Prabhakaran famous. His name soon acquired a halo and for the first time Jaffna youths began hearing about a secret group which called itself the Tamil New Tigers." A year later, in March 1976, Prabhakaran and a group of LTTE members robbed the People's Bank Office at Puttur, near Jaffna, fleeing with close to

Rs. 700,000 worth of cash and jewelry (Richardson 2005, 299). Bolstered by the success of the bank robbery and the Duraiappah murder, Prabhakaran sought to put his long-term plan into effect: the creation of a full-fledged guerrilla movement. He decided that both "Tiger" (referring to the insignia of the ancient Chola Empire) and "Tamil Eelam" had to be part of the new organization's name and settled on Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. He had already prepared the logo for the movement with the help of an artist in Madurai and had also prepared a draft constitution. The group was to be headed by a five-member Central Committee and was to have both a military wing and a political wing. The Central Committee adopted the constitution on May 5, 1976, officially transforming the Tamil New Tigers into the LTTE (Jeyaraj 2009b; Sabaratnam 2003).

Alongside the rise of Tamil militancy, the Tamil United Front was also undergoing changes in its political objectives. In May 1976 a convention was held in the Northern Province constituency of Vaddukoddai, during which the TUF reconstituted itself as the Tamil United *Liberation* Front (Kearney 1985). The insertion of the word "liberation" reflected the growing sentiment that fairness, political rights, and economic opportunities would not be guaranteed to Tamils if they remained a minority population in Sri Lanka. As such, the call for a separate state, which they called Tamil Eelam, became a more prominent demand among the Tamil leadership (Siriweera 1980). As the resolution put forth by the delegates at the convention stated, "This convention resolves that restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of Tamil Eelam, based on the right of self determination inherent to every nation, has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil Nation in this Country" (Vaddukoddai Resolution 1976).

Three months before the July 1977 election, Chelvanayakam passed away. He was replaced as the leader of the TULF by Appapillai Amirthalingam. Diverging from Chelvanayakam's commitment to nonviolence, Amirthalingam at first reached out to the Tigers and accepted violence as a possible strategy (Richardson 2005, 300). Many were under the mistaken assumption that Amirthalingam, who did not mind the Tigers engaging in violence from time to time, had a tight grip on the militant groups. As Swamy (2003, 45) notes, he "appears to have considered the TULF and Prabhakaran's LTTE as two sides of the same coin, one political and ideological and the other armed and military. As later years proved, Amirthalingam was too naïve to think thus."

The pre-election manifesto of the TULF, inspired by the Vaddukoddai Resolution, was a clear sign of how far Tamil-Sinhala relations had deteriorated in the previous seven years:

> What is the alternative now left to the nation that has lost its rights to its language, rights to its citizenship, rights to its religions and continues day by day to lose its traditional homeland to Sinhalese Colonization. What is the alternative now left to a nation that lies helpless as it is being assaulted, looted and killed by hooligans instigated by the ruling race and by the security forces of the State? . . . There is only one alternative and that is to proclaim with the stamp of finality and fortitude that we alone shall rule over our land our forefathers ruled. Sinhalese imperialism shall quit our homeland (quoted in Richardson 2005, 294).

As Richardson (2005, 294) rightly notes, "This manifesto marked a sea change in Tamil political organizations and attitudes in the short space of seven years—from Federal Party to Tamil United Liberation Front, from demands for language rights and devolution of power to demands for political independence."

The UNP was also undergoing a process of transformation with the help of its new leader, Junius Richard Jayewardene. Jayewardene had been involved in the Sri Lankan political scene since the early 1940s and had been an influential player in the UNP since independence. The UNP's disastrous defeat in 1970 convinced Jayewardene that he had to become more assertive. Once he became president of the party, Jayewardene instituted a restructuring of the UNP in order to make the party more attractive, especially to young people. As the general election of 1977 approached, Jayewardene had developed an extensive grassroots network.

The 1977 election was the first held since the adoption of the new constitution in 1972 (Phadnis 1984; Samaraweera 1977). The UNP came to power in a landslide victory, winning 140 of 168 seats in Parliament. The SLFP, which had dominated Sri Lankan politics for many years, was reduced to a mere eight seats. The election results also made clear that the TULF was now a force to be reckoned with, as it captured all fourteen seats and 68.7 percent of the popular vote in the Northern Province, becoming the largest opposition party in Parliament. In the Eastern Province, the TULF had more modest success, winning three of the ten seats. Such nonuniformity between the Tamils in the North and East would, in the coming decades, continue to be a nagging problem for militant groups professing to speak for all Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The 1980s and Full-Scale Civil Unrest

While the TULF was only modestly successful in the Eastern Province, the party and its leader, Appapillai Amirthalingam, still found themselves on an entirely

new playing field after the election. As the TULF had the second-largest number of seats in Parliament, Amirthalingam became the leader of the opposition. Tamil militant groups with whom Amirthalingam had developed a working relationship were suspicious of his newfound fame in Colombo. But even though his new role gave him a national presence, he was not in a position to negotiate a workable compromise. It was also a problem that Jayewardene did not know Amirthalingam all that well. Between 1976 and 1977, G. G. Ponnambalam, Murugesan Thiruchelvam, and S. J. V. Chelvanayakam—Tamil leaders whom Jayewardene knew and had worked with—had all died. According to A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, Chelvanayakam's son-in-law and an influential scholar of contemporary Sri Lanka who served as an intermediary between TULF leaders and the president, Jayewardene, while speaking in glowing terms about past Tamil leaders, described TULF members as "small minds, small people" (Wilson 1988, 141). TULF leaders in turn mistrusted Jayewardene as the man "who had torpedoed the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact" and who had made negative speeches about Tamils following the election (Wilson 1988, 141).

After the election, Jayewardene initiated a process that led to the rewriting of the Sri Lankan constitution (see C. de Silva 1997, 253–259). The Constitution of 1978 fundamentally changed the nature of governance in Sri Lanka by replacing the previous Westminster-style parliamentary government with a presidential system, characterized by a powerful chief executive (Ross and Savada 1988). The constitution also repealed many of the policies that had given rise to Tamil resentment. Sinhala remained the official language of Sri Lanka, but under Section 22 of the new constitution, Tamil was given "national language" status, allowing it to be used as the language of administration in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The new government also reversed the "standardization" policies with respect to university admissions that had been a major point of contention for Tamil youth seeking higher education. The changes, however, were viewed as largely symbolic. By then Tamils were demanding something much larger, as the pre-1977 election manifesto had stated: "Sinhalese imperialism shall quit our homeland" (Richardson, 2005; see also Warnapala 1979, 180–181).

While negotiations continued, the Tamil Tigers launched several attacks in the late 1970s. In response to increasing militant activity, the government declared a state of emergency and dispatched troops to quell the violence. The ensuing Sinhalese backlash hampered negotiations between the TULF and the government. In 1979 the government passed the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was roundly denounced by rights groups as incompatible with democracy (see Manoharan 2006). The act, which became permanent law in 1982, gave law enforcement officials the right to arrest and question "suspected ter-

rorists" without judicial oversight. Intended to criminalize Tamil militancy and therefore snuff it out, the act instead, as DeVotta (2004a, 149) writes, "made terrorists out of the security forces" who were empowered to arrest, imprison, and hold without trial all suspected subversives for eighteen months.

The Road to Black July

In 1980 discussions were underway to consider implementing district councils, which had been on the agenda of Tamil politicians for some time. The councils were envisioned as a way to prevent power from concentrating at the center, in Colombo, and to bring policy making and bureaucratic authority to local districts (Wriggins 1981). The UNP and SLFP had long promised to establish these councils but repeatedly reneged in the face of Sinhalese backlash. According to critics, the councils would inevitably lead to demands for the implementation of a separate state. Negotiations continued behind the scenes and figures in the government and TULF leaders eventually agreed on the establishment of the District Development Councils, which would be delegated particular authority by the central government (Wriggins 1981, 208–209).

Eventually, councils were established in twenty-four districts, and elections were called for June 4, 1981. While the SLFP refused to participate, the UNP, TULF, and Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna members prepared their candidates. These district council elections would serve as the arena in which communal riots would break out in 1981, a strong foreshadowing of what was to come in Black July 1983. By this time the Tiger movement had split into a handful of militant movements competing for viability: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, led by Velupillai Prabhakaran; the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE); the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization, led by Kuttimani and Thevan; and the smaller Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) (C. de Silva 1997, 269; see also Wilson 2000, 126–135; Hellmann-Rajanayagam 1994).

Tamil militants, fearing that these councils might dampen the passionate plea for an independent state, fired the first shot. While leaving an election rally, the leading UNP candidate for the Jaffna development council was shot and killed by Tamil militants, leading many UNP candidates to withdraw from the race. Hundreds of additional police officers and soldiers were dispatched to Jaffna to oversee the election. Jayewardene also sent some senior party officials to Jaffna to play a leadership role. Unfortunately, the UNP team was led by Industries Minister Cyril Mathew, perhaps the most belligerent anti-Tamil

cabinet member, as well as Lands and Mahaveli Development Minister Gamini Dissanayake, later a presidential hopeful, who was killed by the LTTE in 1994 (Richardson 2005, 387–388).

One week later, a PLOTE gunman began shooting at a TULF meeting in Jaffna, killing two policemen assigned to election duty (Swamy 1994). Police officers went on a rampage and avenged the attacks over the span of three days, burning down the Jaffna Public Library, among other residential and commercial property (Richardson 2005). Cyril Mathew's presence in Jaffna served to convince many Tamils that "the library burning was part of a Sinhalese plot to obliterate Tamil cultural identity in Sri Lanka" (Richardson 2005, 288). The burning of the Jaffna library in May 1981 is etched in the minds of many Tamils in the diaspora as an example of a long-running "cultural genocide" by the Sinhalese majority against the Tamil community. The library held over ninety thousand volumes, including many priceless and irreplaceable Tamil manuscripts. According to certain accounts, Prabhakaran may have been among the crowd of onlookers who watched the library burn. By June 1981, a police manhunt forced Prabhakaran to flee Sri Lanka for India (see Swamy 1994, 73–74).

As the 1982 presidential election approached, all the Tamil militant movements were in agreement that TULF should boycott it. Partly as protest against the Prevention of Terrorism Act and partly due to pressure from militant groups, many voters in the Jaffna district stayed home. In contrast to Sinhalese districts, where voter turnout was 85 percent, the Jaffna district voter turnout was only 46 percent. The UNP, under Jayewardene, again came to power in Sri Lanka. In the years following Jayewardene's victory, the leadership of the Tamil separatist movement would steadily move from the parliamentary politics of the TULF to the rebel attacks of the LTTE. However, Tamil militant groups would not become a serious threat to Sri Lanka until after Black July, when thousands of Tamil youth were drawn to their ranks.

Black July

On July 15, 1983, Sri Lankan forces responded to a tip that Seelan, a high-profile LTTE hit man in Jaffna, had been seen at Messalai, near the Jaffna District town of Chavakachcheri. The vehicles carrying the government forces were quickly spotted and Seelan was alerted. Stuffing his submachine gun in a bag, Seelan and three other LTTE cadres (Aruna, Anand, and Ganesh) began to flee. The soldiers saw them and opened fire. Seelan, suffering from a knee injury, could

not keep pace with the other cadres. Aruna, seeing that Seelan had fallen, went back to help. Seelan asked Aruna to shoot him and escape. Aruna was stunned. Seelan was not only the LTTE's de facto number two but also was a childhood friend. He pleaded that it was only a few more minutes before they would reach the village. Seelan was not in the mood to talk. "Shoot! I am telling you, shoot!" bellowed Seelan. "Shoot me so that I don't get into their hands alive. This is my order. Shoot and run!" Aruna saw tears in Seelan's eyes as he pointed the gun and fired. Seelan collapsed, dead (Swamy 1994, 88). Aruna then hijacked a car and fled the scene.

When Aruna told Prabhakaran the news, the Tiger leader went silent and plotted vengeance. A plan was hatched to ambush a military convoy on a narrow road in Thirunelveli. Prabhakaran approved of the plan and made sure that all high-ranking leaders of the LTTE would take part (Swamy 1994, 89). On the night of July 23, a fifteen-man army patrol codenamed Four Four Bravo, led by Lieutenant Vaas Gunawardena, left its camp and approached Thirunelveli. Mines had been laid along the Jaffna-Palali road and the Tigers were putting the final touches on the detonators when the army patrol neared the site. A heavy explosion damaged the army-patrol jeep. The Tiger cadres opened fire, and thirteen of the fifteen soldiers were killed in the firefight.

President Jayewardene, according to some commentators, tried hard to ensure that the funeral for the dead soldiers would not turn into a political demonstration. The plan was to hold a small funeral with the families of the soldiers and some senior government officials, followed by burial. However, the transport of the bodies from Jaffna to Colombo on July 24 was delayed by several hours, and the funeral had to be canceled. In the meantime, a large group of people had gathered at the Borella cemetery. As hours passed, the crowd grew more agitated. Around 10:00 p.m., violence erupted. The various accounts of that night included mention of gangs of young men with petrol bombs targeting Tamil homes and shops. As inhabitants fled into the streets, many were beaten by the rioters (Richardson 2005, 524; see also Tambiah 1986; Piyadasa 1984). The violence continued for another week. Hundreds of Tamil and Indian businesses were burned, homes were destroyed, and many were beaten, shot, or burned alive in their houses or vehicles. Many women were allegedly raped or forced to exhibit themselves in front of heckling crowds of people. Perhaps the most famous incident occurred at the Welikade maximum-security prison, about four miles north of Colombo. On the afternoon of July 25, Sinhalese prisoners gained entry into the wing of the prison holding Tamil political detainees and killed thirty-five of them with knives and clubs while guards stood by. Two days later, another eighteen were killed at the prison (R. Hoole et al. 1990, 64–

65). One of those killed during the prison massacre was Kuttimani, the leader of TELO (see also Swamy 2003, 79–85).

Estimates of the number of people killed during Black July range from two hundred to two thousand, mostly Tamils. In addition to lives lost, the events of July 1983 also forced some one hundred thousand Tamils into refugee camps after their homes, vehicles, shops, and belongings were destroyed (Bandarage 2009, 105). Around thirty thousand people also became unemployed following the destruction of work sites. As Bandarage (2009, 105) writes, Tamils were severely traumatized by the entire experience, and while many Sinhala individuals came forward to help Tamil victims, "the Tamils' sense of insecurity, anger, and distrust of the Sinhalese generated by the terrible events of 1983 still remain."

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) has collected personal testimonies from some of the survivors of the July 1983 pogrom who are now living in Canada. Their website, "Black July '83: Remembering Silenced Voices," was founded on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Black July, in 2008. It is maintained by CTC volunteers, many of whom have conducted the interviews with survivors. As one CTC member told me, "We knew these testimonials were an integral part of Tamil Canadian history, as this incident triggered a large number of Tamils to flee to countries like Canada." One of the testimonies collected by CTC is from a survivor who was only twelve at the time. Her story reflects a key element in many survivor stories: the random kindness of a Sinhalese or Muslim neighbor who provided shelter. She recalls,

> Talk began to spread that Tamil houses and business establishments were being burnt. Soon news spread of the slaughtering of Tamils on the main streets and the looting and burning of Tamil houses and businesses by Sinhalese rioters. When it started on our street, it came all of a sudden. Vanloads of loud men started driving down the road. While my parents were scurrying around the backyard trying to figure out a way to escape, I got out of the bedroom where they had asked us to wait and went to watch the mob from near the living room. A group of men had gathered outside our home, throwing stones and breaking windows, while others started pouring kerosene on the house. I also saw a few outside with axes and other weapons. I was dragged by my dad back to hide in the bedroom. There were about thirteen of us in that bedroom. Taking up the offer of shelter from a Catholic Sinhalese neighbor behind us, we scaled the back wall and hid in their house overnight, as our house was first looted and then put on fire. That night a big argument broke out in front of their house because some of the other Sinhalese neighbors wanted the kind lady to throw us out on the street to fend for ourselves. Meanwhile, she defended her decision to hide us.

Similarly, one Sinhalese friend recalled to me recently, "I was completely shattered for months. I was actually hospitalized of exhaustion after running around transporting my friends and unknown Tamil-speaking families to safe places. We had nearly fifteen people in our house."

Prior to Black July, many in the Tamil community sympathized with the idea of separatism but were wary of an armed struggle against the Sri Lankan government. Most of the militant movements in the early 1980s were small and fledgling organizations. In the early days, the LTTE seems to have been quite selective in its recruitment of cadres. A former LTTE combatant I spoke with in Toronto told me that, at the time, the "LTTE was very careful in taking people. They didn't just take a bunch of people. They had studied them, looked at their background. They probably had people in various villages from whom they could get background information. They would give a person the runaround and then only take him in." After Black July, there was a marked increase in membership among all of the Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka.

The response by the Sri Lankan government to Black July was dismal—it not only internationalized the conflict but all but ensured that Tamil militancy would replace parliamentary politics for decades to come (Lyon 1999). "President Jayewardene was unequal to the task," writes A. J. Wilson in his account of the response. "At first he seemed numbed and unable to confront the crisis, but he then proceeded from blunder to blunder. He appeared on television on 26 July 1983 with the purpose of assuaging the fears and hysteria of the Sinhalese people, but he did not utter a word of regret to the large number of Tamils who had suffered from Sinhalese thuggery masked by nationalist zeal" (Wilson 2000, 113–114). What Wilson calls Jayewardene's "ultimate blunder," however, is the passage of the Sixth Amendment in August 1983. The amendment outlawed support for a separate Tamil state within Sri Lanka and required all members of Parliament to take an oath of allegiance "to the unitary state of Sri Lanka." Members of the TULF, which was committed to a separate state, refused to take the oath. As Bandarage (2009, 110–111) has pointed out, "The TULF was committed to separatism, but it was also the main opposition party in Parliament and the only democratic political voice of the Tamils. The de-legitimization of the TULF and the lack of state sympathy and support, heightened the fears and anxieties of Tamils. . . . Refusing to take an oath abjuring advocacy of separatism, the TULF leadership left for Tamil Nadu. As the TULF gave up working within the Sri Lankan polity, the armed Tamil groups began to fill the power vacuum and to monopolize the Tamil political agenda." Also, Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict seemed more inevitable as, from late 1983 to mid-1987, the TULF and practi-

cally all of the five militant groups would be headquartered in Tamil Nadu (Bandarage 2009, 114).

While there is largely a scholarly consensus with respect to the consequences of Black July, debate continues about whether the government knew about, or even orchestrated, the pogrom. During the time there was widespread suspicion that government elements, perhaps at all levels, were involved (R. Hoole 2001, 102–113; see also Jeyaraj 2010a). The more controversial question is whether the president and those close to him orchestrated the riots themselves. Some scholars suggest that Jayewardene would have had little to gain by sparking wholesale disruption in the south while he was still attempting to gain control of the North following the riots of 1981. By contrast, L. Piyadasa, T. Sabaratnam, and others point to evidence of the "use of electoral lists to identify the shops and houses of Tamils" as clear evidence of government involvement (Sabaratnam 2004). The government's slow response in quelling the violence is similarly interpreted in contradictory ways, with some suggesting that it points to government complicity and others arguing that it shows just how surprised government representatives were by the onset of the violence. While consensus remains elusive, what is clear is that Black July marked a turning point for the country. Militancy replaced parliamentary politics, and the onset of the civil war forever changed the course of the conflict in Sri Lanka.

The people of Tamil Nadu also reacted strongly to the events of Black July (Hiremath 1992). The Sri Lankan–born chief minister of Tamil Nadu, M. G. Ramachandran, flew to New Delhi and urged Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to intervene. Gandhi assured the citizens of Tamil Nadu and the Sri Lankan government that India could not "remain a silent spectator to any injustice done to the Tamil community" (quoted in Bandarage 2009, 111). Recent scholarship on India's foreign policy of the 1980s has identified the emergence of what is called the "Indira Doctrine," a commitment to India's hegemonic power in the region. According to the doctrine, India had the right to assert itself in neighboring countries where minorities with whom it had "some ethnic affinities" faced some kind of persecution (Krishna 1992, 272). In the face of such aggressive Indian foreign policy, Jayewardene attempted to elicit aid, armaments, and strategic insight from countries such as the United States, Israel, Pakistan, and China. Recognizing India's regional ambitions, these countries were willing to entertain the possibility of covert support for Sri Lanka, but none wanted to do so directly (Krishna 1992, 274).

In mid-1984, Jayewardene flew to London, Washington, and New Delhi. In June, Jayewardene met with President Ronald Reagan at a state dinner attended by Frank Sinatra and George H. W. Bush. During the dinner, members of the

Tamil diaspora in the United States protested in front of the White House. At his meeting in New Delhi with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Jayewardene was told that India had no intention of invading Sri Lanka. An exasperated Jayewardene claimed, "We haven't been able to get the United States, Britain, and India to help us. We have to get help from somewhere. We can't be political waifs. . . . [We] would accept help from the Devil himself to break the back of the terrorists" (quoted in Krishna 1992, 274).

Indira Gandhi's interest in Sri Lanka, while perhaps based on a genuine concern for Tamils, also arose from two additional concerns. First, Gandhi was looking to Tamil Nadu as a possible base of support during the next election. Tamil Nadu returned thirty-nine seats to the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Indian Parliament), and Gandhi understood that she needed those seats in the 1985 election to remain in power. It was necessary for her to form an alliance with one of the state's two dominant political parties, the All India Dravidian Progressive Front, led by Ramachandran, or the Dravidian Progressive Front, led by Muthuvel Karunanidhi (for more on the two parties' rivalry, see Ratan 1993), which did not shy away from supporting the separatist ambitions of Tamil politicians and militants in Sri Lanka. Gandhi, while initially dismissing the All India Dravidian Progressive Front, decided to form an alliance with the party after it was triumphant in the 1980 general election (Richardson 2005, 416–417).

Second, Gandhi shared with many Indians an uneasiness about Tamil Nadu state politics, particularly a fear of "spillover effects" from the violence in Sri Lanka. As J. N. Dixit, India's ambassador to Sri Lanka during the 1987 Indian intervention, noted, "Let us not forget that the first voice of secessionism in the Indian Republic was raised in Tamil Nadu in the mid-sixties. This was exactly the same principle of Tamil ethnicity, Tamil language. So, in a manner, our interests in the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka, Tamil aspirations in Sri Lanka, was based on maintaining our own unity, our own integrity, our own identity in the manner we have been trying to build our society" (quoted in Bandarage 2009, 112). For those concerned with the unity of India, it seemed likely that the rise of separatism in Sri Lanka, if dealt with carelessly, might reignite nationalist sentiment in Tamil Nadu.

Gandhi, while publicly professing to be a neutral mediator between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil militants, authorized the establishment of secret training camps in the mountains of Uttar Pradesh and other parts of India (see Hiremath 1992; Rao 1988). Over the span of roughly four years, militants traveled from Jaffna into Tamil Nadu and then to these camps for between three and six months at a time. In Toronto, a former LTTE combatant who had

joined in the early 1980s told me that he first met Prabhakaran in India and was sent to the North of the country for training:

> We were sent in two batches for training. From Tamil Nadu, we were trained by the government of India. It was supposed to be a secret training camp. The first batch went to Uttar Pradesh, and we were taken to Himachal Pradesh. I was in the second batch. We were given different names; we took an overnight bus from Madurai to Bangalore and, in Bangalore, we had to stay in small groups of twos and threes. Even though you see everyone, you don't talk to them. We then took a two-and-a-half-day train to Delhi, and from Delhi you are taken in two special buses. Even the army officers who trained us did not wear uniforms. We did not know their names. We were trained there for three months in guerrilla warfare, explosives, different kinds of weapons, and intelligence. But they gave *all* the militant groups training. They didn't want only one group to become overly powerful. Simple divide-and-rule strategy.

In addition to training, the Indian government also directly armed the militant groups in Sri Lanka. From 1984, regular weapons shipments arrived in Tamil Nadu, were moved from there to camps along the coast of India, and then were smuggled into Sri Lanka. With India's help, the strength of the Tamil militant groups increased dramatically—estimates have shown that all together these groups may have even rivaled the strength of the Sri Lankan Army (Richardson 2005, 528). Whatever avenues existed for a peaceable solution in the late 1970s and early 1980s effectively disappeared once the Indian government became involved and provided extensive training and resources to Tamil militant groups.

Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31, 1984, by two of her Sikh bodyguards caused immense grief among the Tamil population in Sri Lanka. Shops and businesses were closed and black flags were hoisted to pay homage to Gandhi, who had stood by the Tamil people. In Jaffna, Sri Lankan soldiers danced in the streets and taunted Tamils in the neighborhood with chants of "Amma, enge? Amma, enge?" (Where is your mother?) (Swamy 1994, 134). On the day of her funeral, "militants detonated an explosive every thirty minutes. Amirthalingam called Gandhi 'the only shield against genocide'" (Swamy 1994, 134).

Even without the help of Gandhi, Tamil militant groups, especially the LTTE, flourished in the mid-1980s. Adele Balasingham (2001, 76), the wife of LTTE chief strategist Anton Balasingham and eventual leader of the women's wing of the LTTE, states that 1984 was an unprecedented period in the expansion of the movement. The financial support that drove this growth came directly from Tamil Nadu chief minister Ramachandran. Anton Balasingham had met with Ramachandran in his home and explained to him the "necessity and rational-

ity behind the LTTE's armed struggle for the liberation of the Eelam Tamils . . . [and] with Mr. Ramachandran's personal funds flowing in millions into the LTTE's coffers, Mr. Prabhakaran was able to realize his visionary programme of expanding the LTTE into an authentic national liberation movement" (Adele Balasingham 2001, 77). Prabhakaran never forgot Ramachandran's generosity, and they would remain close until Ramachandran's death in December 1987.

Over the next few years, all the Tamil militant groups—LTTE, PLOTE, TELO, Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students, and EPRLF—would organize brutal attacks against Sri Lankan targets. The worst attack of the period occurred on May 14, 1985. Several LTTE guerrillas made their way to Anuradhapura, the former Sri Lankan capital revered by Buddhists on the island, and opened fire, killing 146 people. A sapling from the Bo tree where the Buddha had attained enlightenment was planted in the city and is a point of pilgrimage for many believers. Although no Tamil militant group openly claimed responsibility, some of the groups, including PLOTE and TULF, expressed revulsion at the attack. The Anuradhapura massacre was the height of a series of massacres during this period and, according to some sources, was a direct response to the Valvettithurai massacre just two days prior to it, when seventy Tamil civilians were rounded up and placed inside a local library, which was subsequently shelled by the Sri Lankan forces, killing everybody inside.

Thimpu Talks

With violence increasing, India persuaded both the Sri Lankan government and the militant groups to call a three-month-long cease-fire beginning in June 1985. Both sides were also called to attend a conference at Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. The militant groups, initially reluctant to take part, caved under pressure from Indian intelligence officials. The Thimpu talks were met with anger and suspicion by Tamils in Jaffna. The militants had gained notoriety partly by undermining TULF's willingness to negotiate with the Sri Lankan government. Now they were being forced to negotiate themselves. During the talks, the Tamil militant groups and the TULF demanded that the Sri Lankan government accept what became known as the Thimpu Principles (Bandarage 2009, 125): first, Tamils in Sri Lanka must be recognized as a distinct "nation"; second, the territorial integrity of the Tamil "homeland," consisting of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, must be recognized; third, it must be recognized that the Tamils have a right to self-determination; and fourth, the citizenship rights of the Tamil plantation workers must be recognized. Since any solution based

on these principles would have "led to a vivisection of Sri Lanka," Jayewardene rejected the principles as a nonstarter (Podder 2006, 581).

Even during the Thimpu talks and the "cease-fire," the violence continued. On August 22, 1985, the Tamil representatives abruptly walked out of the second round of negotiations, accusing the government of violating the cease-fire and preparing to renew the conflict. Once the Thimpu talks ended, the conflict only escalated. Guerrillas ramped up their recruitment efforts, while the government purchased more arms (Bandarage 2009, 128). During this period, the LTTE also moved to establish itself as the sole representative of the Tamil people. Over the next several months, the LTTE would initiate a systematic campaign against rival groups and would eventually decimate much of its competition (see Richardson 2005, 531; Swamy 1994, 191–225; R. Hoole et al. 1990, 78–91).

In April 1986, a minor squabble over putting up some posters related to a tax collection system administered collectively by Tamil militant groups ended with some TELO men assaulting two LTTE members. For Prabhakaran, this was the perfect pretext to set in motion his much larger plan to wipe out his competition. Beginning on the morning of April 29 and into the night, hundreds of LTTE cadres simultaneously attacked twenty-four TELO camps in the North of Sri Lanka, killing many of the group's cadres. As Swamy (1994, 192) writes, "The LTTE was clearly aiming to annihilate the TELO, its strongest rival, with a vengeance that Jaffna would not easily forget." When I asked a former LTTE cadre about the motivations behind the TELO assault, he recalled,

> The problem was that TELO cadres were always intimidating the LTTE cadres. They were working for RAW [the Research and Analysis Wing, India's intelligence agency]. RAW was pissed off at the LTTE because they could no longer control them. It was thuggery by the TELO. . . . These guys were like mobsters. Gun-toting gangsters. So when this fighting started, it was a fight to the finish. We were able to beat them, because TELO did not have proper communications facilities and stuff like that. Whereas the LTTE, they could instantly send messages around Sri Lanka and on to India too. TELO did not have this. Someone had to come and tell them things. If that somebody didn't come, then you didn't know.

As camp after camp began falling, TELO members either defected to the LTTE or simply disappeared. As the killing of TELO members continued, the LTTE vowed that it would not rest until the TELO leader, Sri Sabarattinam, was killed. Sabarattinam, scared for his life, evaded the LTTE for some time before being caught and killed by Kittu, a Tiger commander and close friend of Prabhakaran, in May 1986.

Tensions had also been building between PLOTE and the LTTE ever since

PLOTE gave refuge to fleeing TELO members during the LTTE bloodbath. PLOTE, anticipating an attack, put out a statement that read, "We understand the Tigers are planning to eradicate our organization and in order to prevent another bloodbath, we are suspending all activities" (quoted in Swamy 1994, 208). The LTTE stated that PLOTE was thereafter a "banned" organization and took control of its weapons cache. EPRLF, on the other hand, remained confident that it could defeat the Tigers if attacked. On December 13, 1986, the LTTE launched a lightning attack against the EPRLF, killing eighteen of its members. The organization virtually disappeared from the North, continuing to exist in pockets throughout the Eastern Province.

By late 1986, Prabhakaran had decided to leave India and return to Sri Lanka. On January 5, 1987—in what was known as Operation 5—Prabhakaran quietly boarded a boat off the coast of Tamil Nadu and arrived on the island. A former cadre I spoke with recalled the planning of the operation:

> Usually if cadres are going to the store to buy milk or something, one vehicle will go. If two vehicles leave, that means Prabhakaran is going as well. When two vehicles leave, an unmarked police car also follows them. This was routine. That particular morning, one vehicle left, and the police didn't follow. Then Prabhakaran changed vehicles or whatever. Only his bodyguards knew. It was only when he was coming that we were informed. Only Kittu and one or two people knew. And it was only when we all went to greet him that the driver of the boat himself came to know who his passenger was. That's how Prabhakaran lived for so long. Need-to-know policy.

With PLOTE, TELO, and EPRLF rendered ineffective on the ground, the LTTE was in virtual control of the Jaffna Peninsula. It proceeded to replace much of the Sri Lankan governmental administration with its own, setting up courts, transportation, food distribution services, and media (Bandarage 2009, 126). The LTTE also announced that it would be issuing its own vehicle licenses. While the Sri Lankan government instituted an embargo on fuel supplies and threatened to cut off electricity to the North, it was under constant pressure from the Indian government to find a nonmilitary solution to the conflict. The Sri Lankan government declared a unilateral cease-fire from April 11 to April 20, 1987. The LTTE, however, launched a vicious attack on a bus traveling along the Trincomalee-Habarana Road on April 17. In what came to be called the "Good Friday Massacre," the LTTE killed 127 people and injured 60 (Bandarage 2009, 129–130). Four days later, a car bomb exploded in Colombo, killing 113 and injuring over 200 people. The Sinhalese community was stunned. Opposition leaders in Parliament "bitterly accused the government of failing to protect Sinhalese lives and of coddling the Tigers. A Sinhalese youth, inter-

viewed on a Colombo street, spoke ominously of a 'final solution to the [Tamil] problem'" (Pfaffenberger 1988, 138).

In response to continued attacks, the Sri Lankan government launched Operation Liberation on May 26, 1987, committed to taking back the Jaffna Peninsula. It was quite a brutal campaign for the people of Jaffna, as the Sri Lankan Air Force targeted several temples that housed civilians and dropped dozens of improvised barrel bombs on the city (Swamy 1994, 235). Within three days, Vadamarachchi and Velvettiturai had fallen to the Sri Lankan forces. It appeared that Jaffna would soon fall. However, Indian intervention into the conflict would change matters drastically.

Indian Boots on the Ground

During Operation Liberation, there were allegations that the Sri Lankan government was responsible for many human rights abuses. "Sri Lankan Tamil refugees fleeing across the Palk Straits brought stories of 'massacre, atrocity, deprivation and hunger,' giving rise to anger and alarm in Tamil Nadu. Ramachandran rushed to New Delhi and demanded that Rajiv Gandhi intervene in Sri Lanka 'to save the Tamils'" (Bandarage 2009, 130). On June 3, a flotilla of twenty fishing boats was sent from Tamil Nadu to Jaffna to provide humanitarian aid to the citizens of Jaffna. When the Sri Lankan Navy turned back the flotilla, Rajiv Gandhi's government responded by sending transport planes, guarded by Mirage fighter jets, to airdrop twenty-two tons of supplies into Jaffna.

Jayewardena, seeking to avoid military hostilities with India, agreed to a political settlement. Around July 23, a secretary in the Indian High Commission in Colombo, Hardeep Singh Puri, told Prabhakaran that the Indian and Sri Lankan governments were close to signing an agreement. Puri asked Prabhakaran to come to New Delhi and meet with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. By then, the other Tamil groups—EPRLF, PLOTE, ENDLF, and TELO—were also invited to meet Gandhi, when they were given a chance to approve an agreement between Gandhi and Jayewardene. The four groups other than the LTTE accepted the agreement. Prabhakaran, staying in Suite 518 of the Ashok Hotel and guarded by Black Cat commandos, would have a more ambivalent relationship with the agreement.

On July 28, Gandhi met with Prabhakaran and Anton Balasingham and assured them that the LTTE's interests would be guarded. The Tigers would receive Rs. 5 million per month to rehabilitate their combatants and would also

be given most of the administrative control over the North and East. According to Panrutti Ramachandran, the Tamil Nadu minister who accompanied LTTE leaders to the meeting, Prabhakaran had "agreed to accept the accord as a temporary measure" (Swamy 1994, 244). Gandhi, pleased with Prabhakaran's verbal agreement, flew to Colombo to sign the pact. Someone in Gandhi's staff had advised him not to trust Prabhakaran, to at least get written consent or hold Prabhakaran in Delhi until the LTTE began surrendering weapons. "Prabhakaran has given his word," Gandhi replied. "I trust him" (Swamy 1994, 244; see also Swamy 2003, 150–164).

The Indo–Sri Lanka Agreement to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka (popularly known as the Indo-Lanka Accord) was signed on July 29, 1987 (see Bandarage 2009, 133–134; Hancock 1999; Hennayake 1989; Premdas and Samarasinghe 1988). Several letters that were exchanged between Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene were also included as an annexure to the agreement. The accord, aiming to bring an end to the ethnic conflict, stipulated that the "unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka" would be preserved while also recognizing that "the Northern and Eastern provinces have been areas of historical habitation of the Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples" (quoted in Bandarage 2009, 133). The accord also sought to devolve power to the provinces, join the Northern and Eastern Provinces into one administrative unit, and make Tamil an official language of Sri Lanka. India would provide a peacekeeping force to enforce the accord.

The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) began landing in Jaffna even before Gandhi had returned to New Delhi (Rajagopalan 1998). The IPKF troops were treated like rock stars by the citizens of Jaffna. Many of the soldiers were garlanded, hugged, kissed, and given sweets. Children ran behind IPKF trucks with smiles on their faces. The presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka would peak in 1989 with one hundred thousand troops. The accord, however, was very unpopular with the Sinhala community in Sri Lanka. Not only did demonstrators fill the streets, but the minister of agriculture stepped down in protest, and Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa and National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali boycotted the signing of the accord (Bandarage 2009, 135).

The Indo-Lanka Accord was seriously flawed from the very beginning, as the LTTE did not sign it. The LTTE, witnessing the arrival of IPKF soldiers without any word from Prabhakaran, was not pleased. One member of the LTTE leadership told an IPKF general, "Look, you are keeping our leader in Delhi. Unless our leader comes here and tells us to hand over the weapons, we won't do it. Now General, if you try to take our arms by force, we will fight you" (Swamy 1994, 249). Prabhakaran returned to Jaffna on August 2, 1987, with a bitter taste

in his mouth. Although he had promised to surrender arms, it soon became clear that he was not prepared to do so. On August 5, surrounded by dozens of journalists eager to witness history, the LTTE handed over two truckloads of mostly obsolete weapons to the IPKF. Prabhakaran was noticeably absent. By September, rumors circulated that not only was the LTTE never going to surrender its weapons but that it had just received a huge shipment of weapons by sea. According to Prabhakaran, there was nothing in the accord that was useful for the Tamil population. He later noted that he acquiesced to the accord only because he was virtually held hostage during its signing (Krishna 1992, 275).

While the LTTE held on to many of its armaments, the other militant groups had complied with the accord and surrendered many of their weapons. These groups then began opening offices in areas where they had been "banned" by the Tigers in an attempt to rebuild themselves "with Indian propping" (Swamy 1994, 256). Such opportunism enraged the LTTE, and tension between the militant groups was once again on the rise. In mid-September 1987, over one hundred LTTE cadres launched a rapid simultaneous attack on EPRLF, PLOTE, and ENDLF members in the East of Sri Lanka, killing roughly seventy Tamils (Swamy 1994, 259). The IPKF could do little except provide safe havens for panic-stricken members of Tamil militant groups fleeing the LTTE. The LTTE threatened all Tamils who expressed support for the accord. TULF leaders were not spared: Amirthalingam, who had been outspoken about his support of the IPKF's efforts to safeguard Tamils, was killed in his home on July 13, 1989 (Swamy 2003, 209). Although he had once admired Amirthalingam, Prabhakaran could not afford to have such a high-profile voice speaking in favor of the Indian presence, which was increasingly becoming a threat to the LTTE.

By September, relations between the LTTE and the IPKF turned sour (Rajagopalan 1998). Thileepan, the twenty-five-year-old political head of the LTTE in Jaffna, began a fast on September 15, 1987, at the Nallur Murugan Temple. The publicly stated reasons for the fast ranged from general Sinhala colonization of Tamil lands to the demand that those arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act be released. When Thileepan died eleven days later, thousands mourned and the grief eventually spurred anti-Indian sentiment in a city that was largely pro-IPKF (Swamy 2003, 174–175). Another important incident took place in October, when a group of senior LTTE cadres were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy. As it was suspected that the government wanted to transfer them to Colombo, the cadres swallowed cyanide capsules, and twelve of them died. It was a startling turn of events, as the Sri Lankan Navy had confiscated the cyanide capsules when the cadres were arrested. It later came to be known that Anton Balasingham, chief political strategist of the LTTE, and Mathaya,

deputy leader of the LTTE, had smuggled in the capsules during a visit with the cadres (Adele Balasingham 2001, 139). While the suicide of the cadres seems to have been approved by Prabhakaran himself, it was nevertheless used as a pretext for a violent rampage in Velvettiturai, which then spread, leading to the savagely violent deaths of nine Sinhala soldiers (their blindfolded bodies were later displayed near the University of Jaffna) and twenty-five civilians in a "newly settled Sinhala village near Trincomalee" (Bandarage 2009, 149; see also Swamy 2003, 179).

In early October, fighting between the LTTE and the IPKF had begun in earnest, leading the IPKF to launch a counterinsurgency campaign called Operation Pawan (Hindi for "wind"), aimed at capturing Jaffna from the Tigers. As Swamy (1994, 271) puts it, "The Indian army, which had been welcomed with garlands and prayers, began shelling Jaffna." The LTTE now argued that the IPKF was a foreign presence in Sri Lanka and should be driven out of Tamil lands. While Jaffna fell by the end of 1987, the human cost was hefty, as the Indian operation had driven out 75–100 percent of people from the peninsula (Bandarage 2009, 150). A former LTTE cadre whom I interviewed in Toronto argued that one of the main reasons the IPKF lost support among Tamil populations was because the organization was not prepared and was much too eager to bring about peace in Sri Lanka. He noted that India should have approached the conflict in a gradual and thoughtful manner. Rajiv Gandhi underestimated the complexity of the problem and believed that he could bring peace to the island overnight. As the former cadre whom I interviewed explained,

> When the Indian Army came in, you know, they were garlanded. When they started the war, they were so brutal that the people turned against them. The accord happened overnight. Suddenly, from some area they brought in soldiers. When you bring soldiers, you have to brief them well. Tell them where they are and why they are there. The Indian soldiers had no idea; they show up, construct camps. Initially, they are told that the LTTE is an ally. Suddenly, the fighting starts and they are told the LTTE is now their enemy. It confused the soldiers. We were fighting in civilian areas, and they were just brutal.

Long before the IPKF ever stepped foot in Sri Lanka, Prabhakaran had told some of his close friends that one day he would have to fight India. The time had arrived. As Bryan Pfaffenberger (1988, 144) wrote at the time,

> Repeating the pattern of the Sri Lankan army's spring offensive, the Indian peacekeeping forces drove the Tigers up to Jaffna, where the LTTE dug into some very well-planned defenses. And it was here that the IPKF experienced the third surprise

> of the year: the strength of the LTTE. The Indian generals seem to have envisioned a quick roundup of the Tigers and a speedy end to the problem. Far from achieving quick results, however, the IPKF have become embroiled in a quagmire that has killed at least 250—and probably as many as 500—Indian soldiers and left more than one thousand of them wounded. Especially humiliating for the proud Indian army was the LTTE defeat of some of India's most highly-trained elite commando forces in hand-to-hand combat.

However, Prabhakaran knew that, even with minor successes, he could not compete with the full weight of the Indian Army. The new president of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, who came to power in January 1989, formed an uneasy and controversial alliance with the LTTE in order to bring about the withdrawal of the Indian forces. In June, at the urging of the LTTE, Premadasa announced that the Indian forces had to leave Sri Lanka in two months. Indian leaders were furious, and angry letters were exchanged between Premadasa and the Indian government. The relationship between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government only got more bizarre afterward. The LTTE's chief negotiator turned the situation on its head when he informed the government that the Indian Army was targeting Prabhakaran. He claimed that the LTTE was without sufficient arms and therefore wouldn't be in a position to hold back the IPKF, and so he asked Colombo for help (Swamy 2003, 208). The Sri Lankan government began arming the LTTE, a militant organization that over the prior several years had launched a merciless campaign against it. With Premadasa's agreement, Prabhakaran took on the role of a patriotic Sri Lankan determined to save the country from an occupying power. Luck had visited the Tigers twice: in July 1987, the Indians saved them from the Sri Lankan government; in 1990, the Sri Lankan government saved them from the Indians (K. de Silva 1998, 323).

With pressure mounting, the IPKF withdrew from Sri Lanka in humiliation on March 24, 1990, leaving behind a trail of destruction. As the Indian Army vacated its camps, the LTTE moved in to prevent the Sri Lankan Army from occupying them and took possession of weapons that the IPKF had left behind. Premadasa's refusal to repeal the Sixth Amendment (the antisecessionist clause) was used as a pretext for the LTTE's return to war in June 1990. Tensions between the LTTE and Colombo quickly heightened when, in the eastern town of Batticaloa, a minor dispute between a Tamil woman and a tailor morphed into one of the biggest bloodbaths that the island had seen in some time.

While the sequence of events is not known, armed LTTE cadres led by Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan (known as Karuna) suddenly surrounded the Batticaloa police station. The officers, taken by surprise, fought back. Premadasa, in

a naïve attempt to alleviate tensions, advised the police officers to surrender to the LTTE. Questioning the order but trusting the president, the police officers surrendered. The Tigers arrested them, took them to an isolated place, and executed all six hundred officers in cold blood. Stunned by the LTTE's betrayal, Premadasa responded with predictable force, bombing Jaffna with little regard for civilian life. The government cut off electricity and telephone communication to the region and instituted an economic embargo, leading to a lack of food and medicinal supplies (Swamy 2003, 219).

Suspicion also grew within the LTTE that some in the Muslim population in the North and East were feeding information about the Tigers to the Sri Lankan government. The LTTE launched a merciless campaign against the Muslims, in one of the darkest periods in the history of the LTTE (Thiranagama 2007). On August 3, 1990, 140 Muslims praying in a mosque at Katankudy were killed by the LTTE, and nine days later another 122 Muslims (including children) were killed in Eravur. Indian journalist Samanth Subramanian interviewed Ismail, one of the survivors of the massacre at the Husseiniya mosque in Katankudy, who recalled that on that hot day he went to the mosque at around 8:00 p.m. for evening prayers. As Subramanian (2014, 173–176) writes,

> [Ismail recounted,] "The prayer was about half over when we heard a shot. It was just one shot, somewhat far away, near the Meer Jumma mosque. I think that was a signal to start." One of the worshippers at Husseiniya yelled: "Shooting, shooting! Run, run!" There were 35 people inside the mosque, and only one door functioned as both entrance and exit. By the time the congregants had risen to their feet, the Tigers were at the mosque's outer gate. . . . The mosque was surrounded on three sides, and through the windows in these three walls, the Tigers tossed in grenades. Then the barrel of a submachine gun was inserted through a hole in the decorative latticework near the door, and the firing began. . . . After the first squall of firing, there was a lull. The Tigers, who had believed the door to be locked, found now that it was merely shut, and they pushed it open. Inside, the mosque was profoundly dark; an oil lamp had been lit to guide the prayers, but it had been extinguished in the confusion. Two Tigers came in, to sift through the bodies with harrowing thoroughness. The first Tiger, carrying a small flashlight, would point to people who still seemed to be alive; the second would finish the job. Ismail, already wounded in his thigh, was certain that he would die, but the two corpses lying on top of him kept him hidden from view. . . . The Tigers heard a sound outside and left the mosque. There was another suffocating silence. Then the Tigers came back in and shouted: "Everybody who isn't injured, get up. Come out and help us take the injured to the hospital." At this, Ismail's nephew, the six-year-old Akram, jumped up and, in tears, shouted: "I want to

> go home. I don't want to be here." The Tigers put the barrel of a gun into Akram's mouth and fired. "He was right by my feet," Ismail said, "and I couldn't do a thing to save him." . . . There was one final round of shooting. The Tigers stood just inside the door of the mosque, framed against the awful night, and raked the floor again with gunfire. Ismail caught one of these bullets in his stomach. When they left, he heard a grenade go off at the intersection of roads near the Husseiniya—another signal, he thought indistinctly before passing out. . . . For the next two years, Ismail went in and out of hospital, undergoing surgeries, learning how to walk all over again. . . . After the slaughter at the Husseiniya, he forbade his Tamil friends from ever speaking admiringly of the Tigers. "'Do it elsewhere, but not in front of me,' I told them. 'If you do, you're indirectly responsible for what happened to me.'"

To make matters worse, on November 30, 1990, the LTTE announced that *all* Muslims in Jaffna, numbering between seventy and one hundred thousand people, must leave the region. They were allowed to bring the clothes on their back and not much else. The rest of what they had, the LTTE stated, "was earned in Tamil Eelam and belonged there" (Swamy 2003, 219; see also Citizens' Commission 2011; Thiranagama 2011).

With the departure of the IPKF, the LTTE also set up something akin to a Tamil state in the North and East of Sri Lanka. A police and judicial system was set up, a system of taxation was put into place, an education curriculum to teach LTTE ideology and history was established, and a visa system was introduced to monitor the movement of people in and out of LTTE areas (for more on LTTE state building, see Sarvananthan 2007; Stokke 2006). As a first-generation Tamil immigrant in Toronto recalled, "In the university, we once had a burglary and many things went missing. Whom did we go to? You know, the University of Jaffna is a corporation paid for by the government of Sri Lanka. It's a state university, but to whom did we appeal when these government properties went missing? Actually, to the LTTE police. They investigated, found the culprits, and handed over the stolen items to us." Some Tamils in the North and East developed a particular antipathy for the system of taxation introduced by the LTTE—called "extortion" by some—and became increasingly disenchanted with the movement (Hennayake 1993, 160–161; Clarence 2007, 97).

The Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi

While the LTTE's state structure was beginning to turn some in the Tamil population against them, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991, would

forever change the perception of the LTTE abroad. While Gandhi had been defeated in the 1989 elections, conditions in India provided him with the hope that he could once again come to power. Traveling around the country, he promised Indian citizens that they could look forward to a more stable country if his Congress Party was elected. Gandhi had remarked to a journalist during these travels that, according to him, the Indo-Lanka Accord was not defunct and that he had no regrets about the IPKF intervention in Sri Lanka. Prabhakaran grew concerned (Swamy 2003, 220–221). In early May, a slew of LTTE cadres went to the election rally of former prime minister V. P. Singh. During the rally, a woman came up to him, crouched down, and touched his feet in a sign of respect. Her name was Dhanu—a short, dark, twenty-five-year-old member of the LTTE's elite Black Tiger suicide bomber squad—and her actions were a well-choreographed rehearsal for what would occur in a few weeks (Swamy 2003, 228).

Dhanu and other cadres had strategically made their way to India a few months before among the hundreds of Tamil refugees who escaped the war-torn North of Sri Lanka after the outbreak of Eelam War II (Swamy 2003, 222–223). In mid-May Indian newspapers had begun carrying details of Gandhi's itinerary, including a public rally in Sriperumbudur, about thirty miles from Madras. As evening approached on May 21, the group made their way there by bus. An excited crowd in Sriperumbudur welcomed Gandhi, who arrived in the city at 10:00 p.m. Dhanu, in the crowd, quietly inched toward Gandhi, came face to face with him, and respectfully placed a garland around his neck. She then bent down to his feet as an act of reverence, while Gandhi moved forward to lift her up. But Dhanu did not rise. Instead, she set off the bomb nestled in her vest. Dhanu, Gandhi, and sixteen onlookers were killed in the violent explosion (Swamy 2003, 229; for more on the assassination and the subsequent investigation, see Kaarthikeyan and Raju 2004).

The Rajiv Gandhi assassination turned much of public opinion in India against the Tigers. India proscribed the LTTE in 1992. Indian citizens were stunned that their country, which for close to a decade had nursed the Tiger cub into an effective fighting force, would see it turn so callously against "Mother India." The killing of Gandhi was perhaps the biggest strategic blunder in LTTE history. While there is some evidence that Prabhakaran regretted his decision, the brutal killing of a young, handsome Rajiv Gandhi would come to shift public opinion around the world. One respondent I interviewed in Toronto told a story about accidentally bumping into Anton Balasingham, the chief strategist for the LTTE, some months later and asking him about the decision to assassinate Gandhi. He was told that "sometimes mistakes are made" (see also BBC News 2006).

By the mid-1990s, the LTTE was almost unrecognizable to many of the cadres who had joined in the mid-1980s. From a modest one hundred cadres in the early 1980s, the organization was now believed to be ten thousand strong, with a women's wing, a powerful navy (the Sea Tigers), commandos, special regiments, heavy artillery, and intelligence wings (see Eliatamby 2012). While there was some suspicion that the LTTE did indeed have an air force, it was not confirmed until the first air strike was carried out in 2007. The LTTE also recruited child soldiers into its ranks, many of whom were sixteen years of age and under. Dubbed the Baby Brigade by various commentators, it was roundly criticized by human rights organizations, leading many Tamils to question their unconditional support of the organization (see Krishnan 2012; Gunaratna 2003). As the LTTE grew in size, the cost of running such a hefty war machine also increased, and it was estimated at the time that the LTTE war against the Sri Lankan government cost around Rs. 80 million per month (Hennayake 1993, 160).

The Killing of a President and Eelam War III

While Premadasa was moonlighting with the LTTE to repel IPKF forces, the Tigers had quietly set up a network of sleeper agents in Colombo. One of these agents, a twenty-three-year-old Tamil man named Babu, had been planted in Colombo to get close to the president and report back to Prabhakaran what he had learned. Babu ingeniously purchased a grocery store across the street from the presidential residence. He was a man who rarely spoke about his past and appeared to have little time for Tamil nationalism or the conflict in the North. He became friends with Premadasa's valet, E. M. P. Mohideen, and soon noticed that many of the president's staff had a soft spot for wine and women. He courted many of Premadasa's staff and garnered their trust, which allowed him easy access to the presidential quarters (Swamy 2003, 239). On May 1, 1993, the ruling UNP party organized a May Day rally in Colombo. Babu arrived at the event on his bicycle and began walking toward President Premadasa, who was standing outside enjoying the festivities. Several security officials attempted to stop him, but Mohideen called to let Babu pass. Moments later, Babu set off a powerful explosive device attached to his body—Premadasa, Mohideen, Babu, and numerous others were killed (Swamy 2003, 240). Many critics pointed out at the time that Premadasa was only the most recent victim of what was becoming a fundamental attribute of the LTTE—its untrustworthiness.

The year 1994 marked the end of the seventeen-year rule by the UNP. In both the parliamentary and general elections, the People's Alliance, led by Chandrika

Kumaratunga, was victorious and set about negotiating a peaceful settlement to the protracted civil war with the LTTE. The daughter of two former prime ministers, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and Sirimavo Bandaranaike—both of whom had come to power pushing anti-Tamil platforms—Kumaratunga seemed to react to the long-running ethnic conflict differently. She and her husband were known to talk freely with the Tamil population, and they even flew to India in 1986 to talk with Tamil guerrilla fighters about their grievances. While in Madras, Kumaratunga met with the LTTE's chief strategist, Anton Balasingham. During the meeting, Balasingham recalls, he told her that "her parents were the main architects of Sinhalese chauvinistic oppression that compelled Tamils to seek secession" (Anton Balasingham 2000, 11). She perhaps had a deeper understanding of the grievances on both sides, as her father was assassinated by a Buddhist monk, and her husband, in 1988, was shot dead by a member of the Sinhalese extremist group Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna.

Kumaratunga joined her mother's political party, the SLFP, and ran for the presidency in 1994 (Schaffer 1995). It soon became clear that she was on her way to victory. She promised that if she won, she would talk with the Tigers and attempt to bring the decade-long civil war with the LTTE to a peaceful close. The LTTE hinted that it would be open to talks as well, but Prabhakaran, who was skeptical about Kumaratunga's sincerity, had to be coaxed into participating by Balasingham. Representatives from the LTTE and the government held negotiations, while Kumaratunga and Prabhakaran exchanged numerous letters with each other (Swamy 2003, 252; see also Anton Balasingham 2000; Singer 1996).

The Declaration of Cessation of Hostilities was signed in January 1995. A month later, four peace-monitoring committees—two from Norway, one from Canada, and one from the Netherlands—were put in place. By August 1995 the government released its "devolution package," calling for an extensive devolution of power from the center. Neelan Tiruchelvam, a TULF parliamentarian and advisor to the president, was chief architect of the package. The devolution package proposed that Sri Lanka be thought of as a "union of regions," in which each of the existing provinces would acquire a separate regional council and a governor who would execute the law and administer public services. Each region was also to have its own "regional police service, high court, education and higher education service, public service, and administrative bodies for taxation, foreign aid, and investment" (Bandarage 2009, 157; see also Schaffer 1996; Fernando 1998). The package also called for the creation of a single North East Province.

While the international community enthused about the peace package and the possibility for peace in Sri Lanka, support was mixed within the country.

Sinhala nationalists, vehemently opposed to the package, felt that it surrendered to Tamil separatist demands (Bandarage 2009, 158). After a few months of negotiations, disagreements arose between Kumaratunga and Prabhakaran related to unwavering demands made by the LTTE over control of the North and East. The government attempted to be a little flexible but "refused to accept all the demands of the LTTE" (Swamy 2003, 254). On April 18, 1995, Prabhakaran wrote to Kumaratunga and stated that the LTTE had no choice but to withdraw from negotiations. Eelam War III had begun, and it would prove to be one of the most deadly periods in the whole civil war. The Sri Lankan government was also growing weary of war, as it was becoming increasingly costly. In 1995 Sri Lanka spent 4 percent of its gross domestic product (Rs. 39 billion) on its continuing war with the LTTE (Edirisuriya 1997, 255; see also Ross and Samaranayake 1986).

With the resumption of hostilities, the LTTE went on the offensive all over the North and East, shooting down Sri Lankan helicopters and air force transport planes. In October Kumaratunga launched Operation Sunshine, aimed at taking Jaffna from the LTTE. As weeks went by, it seemed that the government might be successful. However, Prabhakaran was determined to transform the taking of Jaffna into an empty victory for the Sri Lankan forces. Using a mixture of threats, alarmism, and persuasion, the LTTE turned Jaffna into a ghost town (see UTHR 1995, 1996). While many commentators emphasize the use of threat to accomplish this, it seems likely that creating a sense of fear was also an important tactic. Some who were part of this mass exodus remember the LTTE telling everyone that the army, once in Jaffna, would kill all who remained. They recalled that many did in fact believe this to be the case, and they left with the LTTE as a way of remaining safe (on the role of rumors during war, see Finnstrom 2009). Swamy (2003, 256), in his book on Prabhakaran, captures the exodus on October 31, 1995, as such: a "mass of humanity moved out in pouring rain, often wading through knee-deep water along both sides of the roads, carrying the barest of essentials they could salvage. Shell-shocked people—men, women, children, expectant mothers, and the elderly—were on foot, in cycles and bullock carts, completely choking the road leading out of Jaffna. About a dozen people died in the mammoth evacuation." During his annual speech in November, Prabhakaran discussed the mass exodus as evidence that the Tamil community was on the side of the LTTE and did not want to be "liberated" by the Sri Lankan Army. He noted, "We are relieved that our people have safely escaped from the military siege and the political trap behind it. Yet we are deeply sad about the enormous suffering and pain they are subjected to as a consequence of mass displacement" (quoted in Swamy 2003, 256).

Leading up to the 1999 elections, the LTTE brought the conflict to Colombo as well as to the south of the island. In January 1996 a heavy-duty truck laden with explosives stopped near the Central Bank building in Colombo and detonated. The blast killed sixty, injured fifteen hundred, and devastated the commercial heart of Colombo. In July 1996, as the thirteenth anniversary of Black July was approaching, Sri Lanka braced itself for an offensive by the LTTE. What the LTTE carried out, however, would be like nothing Sri Lanka had seen before. Hundreds of LTTE guerrillas, led by commando units and Black Tiger cadres, attacked a military garrison in Mullaitivu. The garrison was completely destroyed and almost twelve hundred were killed (Swamy 2003, 258–259). Sri Lanka lost in three days what the Indian Army lost during the course of two and a half years.

In September 1999 the Sri Lankan Army captured the strategic town of Mankulam, but a few days later it lost the more important city of Kilinochchi. It is estimated that one thousand soldiers were lost by the LTTE as well as the Sri Lankan Army. Kilinochchi was transformed into the LTTE's administrative capital and would remain so until January 2009. The LTTE also continued its assassination campaigns against those who disagreed with its objectives. In July 1999 Neelan Tiruchelvam, the architect of the devolution package as well as a respected intellectual who had worked tirelessly for the Tamil community, was killed by a suicide bomber in Colombo (Dugger 1999). His death was roundly condemned by the international community. In December 1999 President Kumaratunga narrowly escaped death when an LTTE suicide bomber blew herself up at an election rally. At the time, the president was number one on the LTTE hit list. As Anita Pratap (2001, 97–98) noted around this time, "At any given time, a dozen Black Tigers, the elite commandos of the LTTE's suicide squad, roam Colombo, looking for a chink in her security armor. A few of them have been caught by the police. But several remain, stalking her every move."

Norway and the 2002 Peace Process

While the United States declared the LTTE a terrorist organization in 1997, and the United Kingdom followed suit in February 2001, it was the events of 9/11 that fundamentally changed the world's attitude toward "terrorist" groups. According to some members of the Sri Lankan government, the "global war on terror" that ensued provided the perfect opportunity to reframe the LTTE as a terrorist movement with global ambitions—in line with groups like al-Qaeda—rather than an ethno-nationalist separatist movement with local objectives

(see, for example, Nagar 2010). In a study completed among Sri Lankans in Colombo, 69 percent of respondents believed that the attacks on New York and Washington "had had a beneficial effect for Sri Lanka by bringing attention to terrorism" (Dundes and Rajapaksa 2004, 34).[2] However, as critics of the LTTE argue, instead of riding the wave of antiterror campaigns around the world and using military tactics to fight terrorism, the government in Sri Lanka chose to negotiate with the Tigers (Bandarage 2009, 175; see also Iyer 2007, 225–226).

In the 2001 elections, the UNP, led by Ranil Wickremasinghe, won 109 seats, while Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance captured 77 seats (Shastri 2002). One significant aspect of the 2001 elections was the rise of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), a coalition party consisting of TULF, TELO, ACTC, and a faction of the EPRLF, which won fifteen seats, all in the North and East. The TNA traces its origins to just after the October 2000 parliamentary elections, when it was clear that the fragmentation of the Tamil vote among various Tamil parties was increasingly becoming a problem (Jeyaraj 2010d). To address the issue, former *Daily Mirror* columnist Dharmalingam Sivaram (aka Taraki) organized a meeting at Eastern University. According to Mark Whitaker (2007, 190), Sivaram was convinced that a cease-fire was imminent and wanted to ensure that the Tamil groups were unified beforehand—in other words, that the LTTE henceforth would be seen as the "sole representative" of the Tamil people in any future peace talks.

It was decided at this meeting that a new umbrella organization should be created in order to prevent future fragmentation of the Tamil vote (Jeyaraj 2010e). The official announcement on October 22, 2001, of the creation of the TNA was signed by representatives from the EPRLF, TULF, ACTC, and TELO. The TNA, however, lacked a measure of independence, as it largely worked under the gun of the LTTE. As the journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj (2010d) points out, the LTTE "reduced the TNA to political servitude and ensured that such bondage was well publicized." In fact, Jeyaraj criticized the TNA for continuing to back the Tigers even as the war came to a close. As he wrote in 2010, "The TNA protested at the aerial bombardment and artillery shelling causing destruction of civilian life, limb and property but failed to ask the LTTE to let the civilians free to reach safe areas" (Jeyaraj 2010d).

The LTTE and the Sri Lankan government had up until then engaged in many peace talks, all of which had ultimately failed (the Thimpu Talks in 1985, the Premadasa-LTTE talks in 1989–90, and the LTTE-Kumaratunga talks in 1994–95). Even so, the 2002 peace process was met with much optimism in the international community, for it was the Tigers who took the first step.[3] On December 24, 2001, the LTTE called a unilateral cease-fire, and the newly elected

TABLE 2. Peace Talks, September 2002–March 2003

Dates	Venue	Theme
September 16–18, 2002	Sattahip Naval Base, Thailand	Set up joint task force for humanitarian reconstruction in the North and the East
October 31–November 3, 2002	Rose Garden, Bangkok, Thailand	Formed subcommittees, focused on humanitarian, de-escalation and political issues.
December 2–5, 2002	Oslo, Norway	LTTE decided to explore "a political solution within a united Sri Lanka"
January 6–9, 2003	Rose Garden, Bangkok, Thailand	Aimed to ensure the implementation of urgent humanitarian priorities
February 7–8, 2003	Berlin, Germany	Discussed human rights issues
March 18–21, 2003	Hakone, Japan	In view of the confrontation at sea between the Sri Lankan Navy and the Sea Tigers, both parties acknowledged the need for parallel progress in negotiations on security, economic, and political issues

Source: Podder 2006

UNP government agreed to follow suit, requesting Norwegian facilitation in the peace process. On February 22, 2002, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE formalizing the cease-fire. Six rounds of talks were held between September 2002 and April 2003, at which point the LTTE withdrew from peace talks while upholding its commitment to the cease-fire agreement (see table 2). The government lifted the economic embargo on the North and East and reopened the A-9 highway, the major artery connecting the north and the south portions of the island. On April 10, 2002, Prabhakaran, generally reclusive and shy, called an international press conference in the jungles of Kilinochchi. Around 250 journalists attended the rare event, which lasted two and a half hours. It was Prabhakaran's first public appearance since Indian forces had withdrawn (Shastri 2003, 216–217). Dressed in civilian garb, Prabhakaran reasserted his commitment to the Thimpu Principles and demanded that the government deproscribe the LTTE as a precondition to the talks.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission, which consisted of forty-four personnel from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland, was formed to implement the cease-fire agreement. All violations of the cease-fire agreement were

to be reported to members of the mission, who would attempt to resolve the conflict locally. Less than five months after the signing of the memorandum, a total of 270 violations had been reported against the LTTE and 110 against government forces, ranging from kidnapping and extortion to killings and abductions (Shastri 2003, 217). By the end of 2005, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission reported over thirty-five hundred violations of the cease-fire agreement, the vast majority of which were committed by the LTTE (see Hoglund 2005). Of those, most were related to child recruitment. In total, between February 2002 and January 2006, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) documented over four thousand cases of child recruitment by the LTTE (Human Rights Watch 2006, 8; Krishnan 2012).

The first two rounds of talks were both held in Thailand, in September and November. The third round of talks, which around forty countries attended, pledging $70 million for reconstruction and development, took place in Oslo (Shastri 2003, 218–219). It was there that the LTTE announced that it was ready to explore some kind of political solution within a *united* Sri Lanka. But the talks began to derail thereafter. Hours before the fifth round of talks in Berlin, which would discuss the LTTE's child soldiers and a possible aid program through the World Bank, an LTTE arms shipment was detected by the Sri Lankan Navy, leading to many of the Sea Tigers on board blowing themselves up. After the sixth round of talks in Japan in March 2003, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage called a meeting in Washington, D.C., on April 14–15, during which an additional $3.5 billion was promised toward the peace effort (DeVotta 2004b, 51). As the LTTE had been proscribed in the United States since 1997, it was not invited to the conference. The Tigers announced that the slight was a "grave breach of good faith" and, on April 21, announced that they were pulling out of the peace talks.

While the Sri Lankan government and the international community urged the LTTE to rejoin the peace talks, the Tigers refused. In November 2003 the LTTE put forward its own proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) as a basis for rejoining peace talks. The ISGA proposals offered extensive self-rule to the Tamil people, and the authority, in its design, "resembled a highly autonomous entity akin to a confederate unit and hence evoked strong reactions from the Sinhala south" (Podder 2006, 588). The government, while reluctant, agreed to move ahead with talks on the assumption that, once the LTTE was again at the table, the ISGA proposals could be renegotiated. However, President Kumaratunga rejected the ISGA proposals as an unviable attempt by the LTTE to lay the foundation for a future separate state. While Prime Minister Wickremasinghe was on a visit to Washington, Kumaratunga staged a coup

of sorts during which she seized control over three important ministries—defense, interior, and information—and months later proceeded to dissolve Parliament and call for elections four years earlier than scheduled. The move threw a wrench in the peace process (Bandarage 2009, 189).

The LTTE, as it had done in the past, also used the peace process to equip itself, buying arms internationally, recruiting and training more cadres, and, to the shock of many commentators, developing an air force. The University Teachers for Human Rights (UTHR) in Jaffna, Human Rights Watch and other rights groups also criticized the LTTE for increasing the forcible recruitment of child soldiers, some as young as eleven years old. By some accounts, the total number of LTTE cadres also increased after the peace process, from sixty-five hundred to twenty thousand. The LTTE also used the cease-fire to continue assassinating its Tamil opponents, which included the execution, in August 2005, of the internationally respected Lakshman Kadirgamar, who at the time was serving as minister of foreign affairs (see Jeyaraj 2012; Senaratne 2012).

Anecdotal evidence also points to the likelihood that the LTTE may not have been entirely serious about the peace process from the beginning. In one of my interviews, a man who had volunteered in LTTE-controlled areas during the time of the peace process recalled having a casual conversation with S. P. Thamilchelvan, the head of the political wing of the LTTE, which revealed as much: "When I asked Thamilchelvan about the devolution of powers, he couldn't contain a snort to an otherwise dignified manner in which he spoke to us. He said rhetorically, 'Eevalavu kaalam naangal porradinathu summa athikara pahirvuku thana?' ['Did we struggle this long to merely share power?'] . . . I left Sri Lanka feeling that demilitarization was definitely not an outcome one may expect from the peace talks." Many of my later interviews with former members of the LTTE in Sri Lanka also validated these suspicions.

The Karuna Defection and the 2004 Tsunami

One of the foremost scholars of Sri Lankan politics, A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, wrote in 1994, "Our conclusion is that at the political level, the concept of 'the Jaffna man' and the 'Batticaloa man' is no longer of relevance" (Wilson 1994, 140). In other words, in the political sphere, regional peculiarities were no longer important—everyone, the Jaffna man from the North and the Batticaloa man from the East, was subsumed under a broader "Tamil" identity. Ten years later, his conclusion was dealt a severe blow when the LTTE's eastern commander, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, popularly known as Colonel Karuna,

broke away from the LTTE. Karuna, the longest serving regional commander in the LTTE, who had until recently been part of the LTTE delegation in the peace talks, suddenly informed members of the Norway delegation in March 2004 that he was breaking away from the Tigers and requested a separate peace agreement with the Sri Lankan government (Swamy 2010, 9). On March 5, *Thamil Alai*, the local newspaper, published Karuna's open letter to Prabhakaran accusing the LTTE chief of discriminating against Tamils in the East. It was a grievance that had been made repeatedly by eastern Tamils, who felt not only that they were treated as inferior by Tamils in the North but that their interests and the welfare of their cadres was often neglected (DeVotta 2005b, 102; but see also Jeyaraj 2004).

On March 6 the LTTE branded Karuna a traitor to the Tamil cause. Karuna's loyalists then turned around and burnt effigies of Prabhakaran in two towns in the East (Swamy 2010, 10; see also Philipson and Thangarajah 2005, 39–46). It was the first time that an effigy of the Tiger chief was burnt in any part of the world. In mid-April the LTTE attacked Karuna's forces in the East, forcing the Sri Lankan military to eventually place Karuna and his loyalists in safe houses for their protection. Karuna's defection to the government severely crippled the strength of the LTTE in the Eastern Province. It is estimated that Karuna took with him anywhere between five and six thousand cadres, as well as a significant amount of the LTTE arsenal. His understanding of the inner workings of the LTTE would also prove invaluable to the Sri Lankan government. Karuna and his deputy Pillayan later formed the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers), which became registered as a political party in 2007.

Karuna's defection and alignment with the Sri Lankan government produced at least two identifiable strains of thought among those I spoke to in the Tamil diaspora. Many accused the government of hypocrisy for not prosecuting Karuna for his many sins and overlooking his "terrorism" as soon as he became useful to the state. For other supporters of the LTTE in the diaspora, however, Karuna's betrayal meant that his crimes were no longer "LTTE crimes," even if he committed them while still a valued member of the organization. When I presented well-documented evidence of LTTE abuses in the East (under Karuna's leadership), some of those I spoke to would almost always respond, "Well, that was Karuna." What lies beneath this argument is a belief that the LTTE would, in exchange for the unbridled loyalty of its members, bear the burden of their abuses. And so when fidelity was withdrawn, the LTTE simultaneously erased individuals from the movement—their valor and their vice, past and present, were simply expunged.

While violations of the cease-fire agreement were recorded by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, the peace process was further complicated by a devastating tsunami that struck parts of South Asia on December 26, 2004 (Sarvananthan and Sanjeewanie 2008). Massive tidal waves buried over three-fourths of Sri Lanka's coastline. The tsunami wiped out over thirty thousand lives and displaced over half a million people, with total damage exceeding $1.5 billion. The day after the tsunami, Tiger forces gathered dead bodies and searched for survivors in the debris. During the aftermath of the disaster, the LTTE and the government hesitatingly came together in the relief effort (Global Dialogues Institute 2005, 16; see also Hyndman 2011; Thurnheer 2009). As the different ethnic groups in Sri Lanka worked alongside each other to restore order in the country, there was renewed optimism that such momentum would breathe new life into the peace process. But this was not to be. Less than two weeks after the tsunami hit, the LTTE accused the government of neglecting Tamil communities along the eastern coast that were ravaged by the disaster. The government meanwhile worked to prevent the LTTE from capitalizing on the tsunami to improve its image abroad (C. de Silva 2006, 115).

Somewhat in conjunction with its ISGA proposals, the LTTE had established the Planning and Development Secretariat in January 2004 to coordinate NGO activity in the North and East (see Mampilly 2011). Following the tsunami and the arrival of NGOs collaborating in the relief effort, the LTTE argued that its semistate structure placed it in the best position to distribute foreign aid. In fact, the World Bank, among other large agencies, sought out the Planning and Development Secretariat after hearing evidence of its track record. Many of those involved viewed it as a potential opportunity to bring the LTTE into mainstream politics. Zachariah Mampilly, in a study of the ways that tsunami aid shifted the course of the conflict in Sri Lanka, spoke to aid workers in the Tamil-dominated North and East following the disaster who "praised the rebel relief operation as far more efficient and transparent than its government counterpart" (Mampilly 2009, 314).

With increasing international praise, the LTTE assumed that public opinion was now on its side and demanded that international aid be given directly to the Planning and Development Secretariat instead of being funneled through Colombo. However, suspicion grew that the LTTE was using the tsunami as a way to undermine the sovereignty of the Sri Lankan state. On June 24, 2005, with pressure from the international community, the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS) was established to distribute aid and help in the rehabilitation of affected communities in six major districts in the North and East (Global Dialogues Institute 2005, 19). P-TOMS consisted of three main

subcommittees that included the LTTE, representatives from the Muslim community, and the government of Sri Lanka. P-TOMS would have given the LTTE a significant voice in the reconstruction process. However, its implementation was blocked by the High Court of Sri Lanka following pressure from Sinhala leaders who argued that the government must back out of cooperating with, and implicitly legitimizing, the militant organization (Mampilly 2009, 316).

Mahinda Rajapaksa and Eelam War IV

Leading up to the 2005 elections, the SLFP chose then–prime minister Mahinda Rajapaksa as its presidential nominee. Rajapaksa realized that the leader of the UNP opposition, Ranil Wickremasinghe, would prove to be a formidable opponent in the election. As such, he formed alliances with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the Jathika Hela Urumaya, a party run by Buddhist monks. His subsequent election manifesto was a radical departure from President Kumaratunga's policies. Rajapaksa's agreement with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna and the Jathika Hela Urumaya undergirded his denial that the North and East of Sri Lanka were an "exclusive Tamil homeland," as well as his rejection of P-TOMS. As Chandra de Silva (2006, 118) notes, "Rajapaksa was responding to political necessities, but he was also returning the SLFP both to its Sinhala Buddhist core and its statist policy tendencies, from which Kumaratunga had moved the party over the past 10 years."

The difference in outlook between Wickremasinghe and Rajapaksa created a fairly clear choice for voters. For a decade, the UNP and the SLFP had supported bringing the LTTE to the table. Under Rajapaksa, it was clear that more limitations would be placed on negotiations with the Tigers. The LTTE, for its part, refused to support either candidate and enforced a boycott of the election in the regions it controlled. As minorities made up 22 percent of the electorate (9 percent Muslim; 8 percent Sri Lankan Tamil; 5 percent Plantation Tamil), most of whom would likely vote for Wickremasinghe, Rajapaksa would need a substantial portion of the majority Sinhalese vote to triumph. The small margin of victory—Rajapaksa won the election by only 180,000 votes—signaled that the LTTE boycott of the election was a pivotal factor in his victory. Indeed, even as overall voter turnout was 74 percent, in the northern district of Jaffna, "with over 700,000 voters, only 0.014% recorded a vote" (C. de Silva 2006, 119). The LTTE's reasons for enforcing a boycott are difficult to ascertain, but it seems likely that it did not want Wickremasinghe to win for at least two reasons: first, Wickremasinghe's readiness to negotiate made it difficult for the LTTE to re-

turn to war (which, according to most accounts, was on the mind of the LTTE leadership throughout the peace process); second, once war had restarted, the LTTE could point to the staunchly nationalist platform of Rajapaksa to lobby for international intervention (see also DeVotta 2009, 1037).

While most were not optimistic about a lasting peace, Rajapaksa offered to negotiate with the LTTE immediately following his election victory and asked the Norwegians to continue their involvement. Another round of peace talks took place in February 2006 in Geneva, with more talks planned for April 19–21. The LTTE agreed to refrain from violence, and the government agreed to disarm the Tamil paramilitary forces working against the LTTE (particularly the Karuna faction) (Podder 2006, 590). In early April the LTTE backed out of planned peace talks in Geneva after it claimed the government had not been cooperating (C. de Silva 2007, 103). The same month, the newly elected Conservative Party of Canada, under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, banned the LTTE as a terrorist organization.

Beginning in late April 2006, war between the LTTE and government forces was once again on the horizon. On April 25 Sri Lankan Army commander Sarath Fonseka was almost killed by a suicide bomber (see Swamy 2010, 42–44). The government responded with air strikes in LTTE areas. While the LTTE sent representatives to Oslo on June 8 for more talks, it soon became clear that war was inevitable (see Fuglerud and Hasbullah 2007). In late June Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Parami Kulatunga was assassinated. On July 20 the LTTE made the highly provocative decision to close the sluice gates of the Mavil Aru Reservoir in the East, effectively blocking the water supply to fifteen thousand people. The government had no choice but to act. When troops were sent in to reopen the reservoir, fierce fighting broke out between government forces and the LTTE, lasting several weeks. In early August heavy fighting also took place in Muttur, resulting in the deaths of 150 LTTE cadres and the displacement of twenty-five thousand of the town's residents (Mayilvaganan 2009, 29; ICG 2008, 3).

On August 14 the Sri Lankan air force—in what became known as the Senchcholai massacre—dropped several bombs on a children's home, killing over fifty schoolgirls and staffers. The Sri Lankan government insisted that the facility was an LTTE training camp and thus a legitimate target. UNICEF, UTHR, and others argued that this was not the case (UNICEF 2006; TamilNet 2006; UTHR 2006). Those who died at Senchcholai "were not LTTE cadres and many of them had no intention of ever joining," reported the UTHR (2006). The government's defense spokesperson, Minister Keheliya Rambukwella, however, claimed that the facility was an LTTE transit camp and went so far as to say that

once a child receives military training, "we cannot look at their age, but instead at what they were aiming to do" (quoted in UTHR 2006).

On March 26, 2007, to the shock of many in Sri Lanka, the LTTE carried out its first air attack, hitting the Katunayake air force base adjoining the Katunayake International Airport. The attack occurred just a few months after an assassination attempt on the president's brother, Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa, in December 2006 and was the first in a series of air attacks targeting military bases and commercial installations (Mayilvaganan 2009, 29–30). Throughout late 2007 and early 2008, the LTTE launched a brutal campaign of bus and train bombings across the country, in total killing around 80 people and injuring over 250 (ICG 2008, 2). The government, using the Karuna faction to full effect, gained control of the East of Sri Lanka by September 2007. On November 2, 2007, S. P. Thamilchelvan, the political head of the LTTE, was killed in an air strike somewhere south of Kilinochchi. On December 7, 2007, Defence Minister Keheliya Rambukwella told Parliament that Sri Lankan forces were nearing Kilinochchi and that it was quite possible the LTTE would be defeated in 2008 (Mayilvaganan 2009, 30). On January 2, 2008, the Rajapaksa government formally abrogated the six-year-old cease-fire agreement, which, to put it mildly, already lay in tatters. The decision was clearly a sign that the government was on the verge of a major attack (Wickramasinghe 2009, 60).

With the LTTE increasingly on the defensive, the treatment of Tamil civilians under its control became increasingly harsh. As Human Rights Watch (2008c, 2–3) noted, the LTTE "has brutally and systematically abused the Tamil population on whose behalf they claim to fight, and . . . the LTTE bears a heavy responsibility for the desperate plight of the civilians in the Vanni." Human Rights Watch, through field research, found evidence of the LTTE's restriction of the free movement of civilians in the conflict zone, of ongoing LTTE forced recruitment of civilians, and of increasing use of forced labor. The government, for its part, announced in September 2008 that it could no longer guarantee the safety of United Nations officials and ordered them to withdraw. Many UN staff withdrew to a new forward operating base in the town of Vavuniya. With international agencies barred from the conflict zones, groups like the UN and UNICEF could no longer bear witness to human rights abuses in the North (Human Rights Watch 2008c, 4).

In September 2008 the LTTE announced that those attempting to avoid recruitment under its newly instituted policy of "one family, one person" would face severe punishment. If individuals called up for service did not report, the LTTE would arrest ten relatives and use them as forced labor on the

front lines. A humanitarian official had told Human Rights Watch about the twenty-one-year-old son of a local staffer who had gone into hiding from the LTTE. "In response," a Human Rights Watch report states, "the LTTE arrested the local staff member, his wife's brother, and other male relatives, until the recruited son came out of hiding and agreed to fight for the LTTE" (Human Rights Watch 2008c, 9). With the resumption of war, there had also been incidents of "disappearances" around the country. According to Human Rights Watch (2008b, 2–3), most disappeared were young Tamil men apprehended by government authorities, and they were "feared dead."[4]

A Humanitarian Catastrophe and the Defeat of the LTTE

With the official abrogation of the cease-fire agreement, General Sarath Fonseka led tens of thousands of ground soldiers to defeat the LTTE (Wickramasinghe 2009, 60). While civilian casualties were high, sparking criticism from international aid organizations, the government made swift progress against the LTTE. In June 2008 government forces captured the Mannar Peninsula, and in July it seized four additional LTTE bases. On September 2 the government defeated LTTE rebels at Mallavi, bringing the army ever closer to Kilinochchi, the administrative capital of the LTTE. The relentless offensive in the North displaced an estimated 250,000 Tamils, who began moving to the LTTE-held town of Mullaitivu. Throughout 2008, the LTTE continued to bomb several civilian buses, and it launched a slew of suicide bombings, killing civilians as well as several politicians in Colombo. The government, for its part, began targeting journalists who were critical of its conduct of war: Keith Noyahr of the *Nation* was kidnapped and beaten before being released; journalist J. S. Tissainayagam was detained and went through arduous court proceedings before being pardoned; and Lasantha Wickrematunge, a prominent antigovernment journalist, was killed by four armed assassins on January 8, 2009 (see Weiss 2011, 147–157; Wickrematunge 2013).

The fairly rapid defeat of the LTTE began on January 2, 2009, with the capture of Kilinochchi. As Wickramasinghe (2009, 65) noted at the time, "The fall of Kilinochchi and the administrative structure put in place by the LTTE in the past ten years is a symbolic blow to the rebels' dream of a Tamil homeland." Likely convinced that the military would halt its advance after taking Kilinochchi, Prabhakaran and the rebels held strong on a quickly shrinking spit of land in the northeastern region of Mullaitivu (Swamy 2010, xxii). But on January 9 the Sri Lankan government captured Elephant Pass, the strategic cause-

way linking the Jaffna Peninsula with the mainland, which the LTTE had held since 2000. After Kilinochchi, the LTTE ranks were severely weakened—several brigades had been completely decimated (UTHR 2009a). With increased forced recruitment, the LTTE was waging war using cadres who were more concerned about staying alive than dying for the cause. With the fall of Kilinochchi in January, the LTTE retreated to its fortifications around the towns of Puthukkudiyiruppu (often abbreviated as PTK). From January to April, PTK and its surrounding areas became the main theater of the conflict.

In September 2008, as Sri Lankan forces were closing in on Kilinochchi, the national UN staff members who hadn't already retreated shifted their base from Kilinochchi to Puthukkudiyiruppu (ICG 2010b, 10). On January 21 the government announced that it was creating the first of what would become three no-fire zones (NFZS) approximately seven kilometers from PTK. Once the zone was declared, it became clear that the LTTE's western front was dangerously close to the southern boundary of the first NFZ. According to the International Crisis Group (2010b, 12), since the NFZ was created unilaterally by the Sri Lankan government, "the LTTE's presence in the NFZ was not in itself a violation of international law." However, both parties to the conflict had a responsibility to protect the civilian population. The UN, some staff from various NGOs, and ICRC workers located themselves around the NFZ and set up a distribution center to provide food and shelter to the civilians pouring in.

The UN convoy in PTK could hear the sound of shells falling ever closer to their position. As journalist and UN spokesman Gordon Weiss (2011, 110) notes in his book on the final days of the war, "Rounds were falling just hundreds of meters away, as Tiger mobile artillery units played cat and mouse with SLA artillery locator devices. They would fire off a shell or two before hitching their howitzer and moving quickly to a fresh location. Within minutes the spot they had just vacated would be pummeled by incoming fire, often in the form of multi-barrel rocket strikes, whose forty rockets would tear through a large swathe of land, cutting down civilians." Even as the UN called on government forces to stop firing, shells kept falling in the NFZ, some landing near the distribution center and killing civilians waiting in line for food. As Harun Khan, the veteran colonel from the Bangladesh Army, states, "We realized we were in serious danger. People were running everywhere, terrified, uncertain where to go to escape the shelling. The Tamil Tigers were placing their guns dangerously close to our location, and were quite intentionally in my view drawing fire towards the hospital. Civilians were being killed" (quoted in Weiss 2011, 111).

It was clear from the actions of both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government that civilian casualties were of little concern. The government was

committed to wiping out the LTTE and was willing to tolerate the deaths of thousands of civilians to accomplish this end. The LTTE was similarly willing to tolerate civilian casualties with the hope that a humanitarian crisis mixed with pressure from the diaspora would produce a cease-fire and give it room to breathe. According to Human Rights Watch, the LTTE was actively preventing civilians from seeking safety, pulling them into danger as it further retreated. "And as the area that the LTTE controls shrinks, the trapped civilian population has become concentrated, increasing the risk of high casualties in the event of attack and placing greater strains on their living conditions," the report notes (Human Rights Watch 2009b, 5).

A thirty-five-year-old father of three, when he arrived at the College of Education camp in Vavuniya, told Human Rights Watch how the LTTE refused to let civilians flee the conflict zone:

> When we came to Suthanthirapuram, it was full of dead bodies. Bodies were lying along the road. Nobody cared about them. They smelled. We didn't have food for two days. We slept in the field. Some 150 people started out together, but when we tried to leave, at Suthanthirapuram, the LTTE tried to stop us. There was only a narrow path to leave by. The LTTE caught us. There was fighting, arguments. They were shooting at us. Many people were injured and killed. It was shocking to see. Only 65 were in my group when we came out. We were separated from the rest along the way. One father was carrying his child on his back. As they were running from the LTTE, he was holding him by the arms so hard—in order not to lose him—that he broke both of the child's arms (Human Rights Watch 2009b, 7; see UTHR 2009a for more eyewitness accounts).

While there is indeed evidence that the LTTE was keeping civilians hostage in conflict zones, two other things are also clear. Based on my subsequent interviews in Sri Lanka with Tamil civilians who lived through the final stages of the war as well as with ex-LTTE combatants, it is, first, clear that many civilians did not want to escape to the government side because they did not know what would happen to them (Human Rights Watch 2009b, 28). Second, almost everyone I spoke with made it clear that the space in which the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army were fighting was shrinking fast, and they were simply trapped in between. Many recalled that they stayed in a bunker for days, knowing that they would be struck by the bullets whizzing by if they lifted their heads to look around.

Throughout January 2009, human rights groups reported civilian deaths resulting from shelling in civilian areas, including hospitals and NFZs. On January 26 shelling in Puthukkudiyiruppu killed 102 people and injured more than

250. The security forces shelled the hospital again on February 2–4, killing more patients. While instances of shelling are numerous, there are also many stories of Sri Lankan Army officers helping civilians. For example, in February 2009, as the Fifty-Eighth Division troops came upon close to twenty thousand civilians inside the NFZ, they instructed the civilians to move toward the soldiers as an avenue to safety. As Weiss (2011, 181) observes,

> It was a fraught experience. Ordinary soldiers had to determine if there were Tiger fighters among the desperate people who had heard the summons and were waiting for the battle to pass over them. After crouching for days on end without cooked food or water in shallow trenches, bodily shielding their children, people rose abruptly and dashed through the underbrush to what they hoped was safety. Sometimes nervous soldiers shot them. Sometimes they were caught in crossfire. For the first time, reports began to reach the UN that Tiger cadres were shooting at people to prevent them from escaping. On the whole, however, the vast majority of people who escaped seem to have been received with relative restraint and care by the front-line SLA troops, who quickly passed them up the line for tea, rice and first aid. The faceless enemy, such a source of terror for the young peasant men and women of southern Sri Lanka who made up the majority of the troops, were suddenly given a human aspect, as thin, bedraggled women clutching children to their breasts and pleading in a foreign tongue fell at their feet.

After the February 4 shelling of the PTK hospital, around three hundred patients along with ICRC and UN staff moved to Putumattalan. A makeshift medical facility was set up at a Putumattalan school, which consisted of four classroom buildings and two temporary shelters. Both the UN and the ICRC provided the government with the GPS coordinates of their location, and they also flew a flag with a red cross on a white background. Hundreds of patients nursed their wounds under trees, while others were bleeding from shrapnel wounds. I've traveled to Putumattalan several times, wanting to see the school, wanting to understand the geography of the area. Traveling east along the Puthukkudiyiruppu-Matalan road, travelers reach a fairly nondescript intersection. Turning left takes you to the bombed-out school/hospital. Turning right puts you on the road to Mullivaikkal. The school is currently somewhat active, with students using it for various classes. Those in charge of rebuilding it told me quite openly, but in whispers, that they were at the hospital in the final days. One pointed to what looked like a newly painted green well in a nearby field. "That's where we put everything," he said. "That's where you put what?" I asked. "We had to amputate arms and legs in the final days," he said. "We threw it all down that well."

The makeshift hospital at Putumattalan was located in the second NFZ, established on February 12. According to a 2010 ICG report, "For three days before the new NFZ came into effect, the security forces shelled the civilian area in Putumattalan from the south and from Chalai to the north, striking in the immediate vicinity of the hospital and killing wounded civilians. There was no LTTE military presence near the hospital" (ICG 2010a, 18). As this NFZ was much smaller than the first, LTTE cadres and civilians were, unfortunately, left sharing a fourteen-square-kilometer spot of land. In the following weeks, Putumattalan hospital was shelled, leading to the death of many civilians. Most of the eyewitness accounts from late February and early March make clear that no LTTE troops were near the hospital leading up to the shelling.

In the last months of the conflict, recruitment efforts by the LTTE also became even less discriminating. Tiger recruiters would sweep areas of the Vanni, as families attempted to hide their children. As Weiss (2011, 187) points out, "The squad leaders were motivated by self-preservation as much as anything else, filling quotas that helped them and their own families to evade recruitment to the front lines. Open confrontations increased, with squads dealing out summary executions when people resisted, and dozens of families ganging up to disarm and shoot or beat to death recruitment squads attempting to take their children." Forced recruitment increased dramatically in the final months of the conflict. As one young survivor told UNICEF,

> On that morning when she was recruited my aunt heard about it and came to tell my mother. We knew the rule about each family contributing [a member to the Tigers] and so we thought to ask for them to swap—her for me. We thought it would be difficult for her if she were recruited to run away. I told my mother I could go with them and then I would escape later. So we went to the LTTE camp but at the gate a cadre told my mother not to take me inside or I'd be recruited, so I turned back home. The next day the cadres came to the hut—my mother argued and told them they had already taken my sister, but they insisted. I was taken to dig trenches and after we moved around and were sent to the [front line]. After two weeks on the [front line], my friend and I were put on the checkpoints together with a cadre who wanted to escape. So one evening we threw our weapons away and ran. I ran back to my hut but my family was gone and some female cadres were there. They told me not to stay or someone would recruit me. They told me the civilians were all moving in a big group and to join them and [cross to the government lines]. I ran with those people and met a relative who said my mother was near the front, so I went forward and found her and my sister (who had escaped after 3 days) and we crossed out together (quoted in Weiss, 2011, 187–188).

I would hear similar stories often during subsequent interviews in Sri Lanka, stories that make clear the dire nature of the conflict. They also signal that many cadres, who were likely forced into fighting, began protecting and warning other potential recruits to stay away from dangerous areas. It is evident that many of the cadres fighting in the last months were nothing more than placeholders, designed to simply slow the advance of the Sri Lankan Army. They were not committed fighters and were simply used by the LTTE to fill the ranks. When opportunities arose for escape, many did not hesitate.

By April 23, the Putumattalan hospital, along with scores of civilians, had been moved to Mullivaikkal. Hospitals in Mullivaikkal were continuously bombed throughout the last month of the conflict. According to research conducted by the U.S. Department of State (2009, 4), Mullivaikkal Hospital was shelled twice on May 2. As the International Crisis Group (ICG 2010b, 20) reported, "On 11 May, the security forces shelled the whole of the Mullivaikkal area. Many civilians died in their bunkers with no one to come collect and bury them. On 12 May, after many of the injured had been brought to the second hospital, the security forces shelled it. Scores of civilians and medical staff were killed and injured. As one witness said: 'These were not LTTE, these were just families, children, old people, it was unbelievable.'" According to several doctors who spoke with Human Rights Watch, nearly one thousand patients were in the hospital at the time of the attack, including many wounded during earlier attacks (Human Rights Watch 2009a).

On May 8 the government declared the third and final NFZ, which, while only a few square kilometers in size, contained around one hundred thousand civilians and whatever LTTE cadres remained. The last ten days of the conflict were a period of intense shelling, resulting in immense civilian suffering. During this time, the LTTE became increasingly desperate and, according to numerous eyewitness accounts, began shooting civilians attempting to leave the NFZ. "It has become normal that you could die any moment," one individual told University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) (UTHR 2009b). "In desperation, resulting from shelling, food scarcity and total misery some people felt it was better to walk out of the safe zone although you know the LTTE is shooting people who attempt it."

Even in the final days, the LTTE continued to hold the Sri Lankan Army at bay, despite the fact that the government forces had the clear advantage of a large supply of healthy soldiers (Weiss 2011, 219). On May 15 many Tiger cadres began to burn their weapons in preparation for surrender, some even committing suicide. The next day, Balasingham Nadesan, the head of the LTTE's political wing, spoke to the *Times* newspaper and offered to surrender. The govern-

ment scoffed at the attempt. On the same day, as the Sri Lankan Army took the last of the central positions, General Sarath Fonseka declared victory. Around noon on May 17, Kumaran Pathmanathan (popularly known as KP), the LTTE's head of international relations, issued a statement: "This battle has reached its bitter end . . . we have decided to silence our guns." As KP issued this statement, it was extremely likely that Prabhakaran and the remaining leadership of the LTTE had already been killed (for more on the death of Prabhakaran, see Weiss 2011, 222–224; UTHR 2009b; Jeyaraj 2009a). On May 24, 2009, KP issued a press release, acknowledging this fact: "We announce today, with inexpressible sadness and heavy hearts that our incomparable leader and supreme commander of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam attained martyrdom fighting the military oppression of the Sri Lankan Government" (quoted in Jeyaraj 2009c). With the death of Prabhakaran and dozens of others in the LTTE leadership, the protracted civil war in Sri Lanka came to a bloody conclusion.

The International LTTE Structure

The story of post-LTTE developments in the diaspora is one of leadership struggles, demonstrations, innovative organizations, and new articulations by Tamil youth of the future of Tamil nationalism. But even during the decades that preceded the war's close, the structure of the LTTE abroad went through some dramatic changes. From around 1983 to 2003, the international fundraising, arms smuggling, and propaganda structure of the LTTE was run by Selvarasa Pathmanathan (KP). KP's life for the two decades that he was in charge of the international structure reads like the script for a Hollywood thriller. He was known to use around two dozen aliases, carry around two hundred passports, and maintain bank accounts in several countries around the world. In 2003, for reasons largely unknown, KP was replaced by Veerakathy Manivannan (known as Castro). Castro proceeded to populate many of the overseas offices with his own trusted individuals. Between 2003 and 2008, KP was effectively out of the LTTE and had "retired" in Thailand. In December 2008 KP spoke with Prabhakaran on the phone. As he stated in a recent interview with journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj (2010c), "Prabhakaran called me and we had a very long conversation. He told me of the military situation in very frank terms. . . . He wanted me to re-join the movement and start purchasing and transporting supplies again."

KP told Prabhakaran that it would likely take him over a year to reestablish smuggling networks. With the LTTE and its front organizations on terrorist lists

in many countries, including Canada, fund-raising and other activities would prove difficult. Prabhakaran responded that the LTTE would probably not survive another year. According to KP, "Prabhakaran said that I must spearhead the task of bringing about a ceasefire and getting the LTTE a respite. He wanted me to commence talks with whomever necessary and bring about a ceasefire" (Jeyaraj 2010c). In my interviews with several close confidants of KP, I was given a copy of a letter that Prabhakaran had sent to the prime minister of Thailand, Abhisit Vejjajiva. Dated January 12, 2009, the letter states, "I take great pleasure in letting you know that our organization has appointed Mr. Selvarasa Pathmanathan, a senior representative of our organization, as the Head of our newly constituted Department of International Relations. In this capacity, he will also function as chief diplomat and negotiator on behalf of our organization from now onwards." With KP's reentry into the Tamil political scene, a rivalry began between himself and the Castro faction. When Castro was killed in Sri Lanka along with the other top leadership of the LTTE in May 2009, the leadership of the international structure passed to Perinpanayagam Sivaparan (known as Nediyavan, or "tall man"), who currently lives in Norway (ICG 2010a, 8). This leadership struggle between the so-called KP faction and the so-called Nediyavan faction would come to greatly color postwar developments in the diaspora.

CHAPTER TWO

Tamil Migration to Canada

The Turbulent 1980s and the Birth of a Community

As the war was winding down in Sri Lanka, the Tamil community in Canada and around the world took to the streets in month-long demonstrations calling for international intervention and a negotiated cease-fire. Mark Steyn, a conservative-leaning writer, perhaps a little taken aback by the tens of thousands of Tamils now occupying the streets of Toronto, set out to examine the obvious link between these protests and Canadian immigration policy in the pages of *Maclean's*, a popular Canadian weekly news magazine (Steyn 2009). "The Tamil protests were one of those rare moments when the veil lifts and Canadians glimpse the sheer scale of societal transformation," he wrote. "The obvious question prompted by the size of demonstrations in Ottawa and Toronto is: how did Canada acquire that many Tamils?" The 2006 Canadian census, as well as community estimates, places the population of Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada between 150,000 and 200,000. That many Tamils, Steyn writes, "would seem to be more Tamils than anyone might reasonably need—or indeed, even if you did need them, more than you could reasonably expect to acquire." While I doubt, judging by the rather impetuous and brash tone of his remarks, that Steyn was proposing an academic question for readers to explore, his question is indeed an academic one—and it is one that does have an answer if he cared to probe further.

The fact that Canada is host to the largest population of Sri Lankan Tamils outside of Sri Lanka itself—and thus served as a stage to large mobilizations and an organizational presence throughout the war—was not a matter of sheer chance but a result of shifts in Canadian immigration and refugee policy, as well as lobbying efforts by early members of the Tamil community in Canada. The earliest Sri Lankan migrants to Canada were Burghers, and it is estimated that between 1946 and 1955, about twenty-seven Burgher individuals migrated to Canada (Chandrasekere 2008, 11). Sinhalese and Tamils started arriving after 1956, but their numbers remained fairly small, with the total number of Sri Lankan immigrants not exceeding five thousand by 1970. As Sarath Chan-

drasekere (2008, 12–13) points out, these early migrants represented only one segment of Sri Lankan society—the Westernized middle class—most of whom came with enough money to support themselves and their families, as well as with a high level of education.

At the time, however, there were no distinctive "Tamil" organizations functioning in Canada. In the late 1960s, according to members of the early Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada, most Tamils were part of a South Indian–Sri Lankan Tamil cultural organization called Bharathi Kala Manram, which remains active to this day. Most Tamil cultural events, for both South Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Tamils, took place as part of this organization. As the Sri Lankan Tamil population increased in Canada, and as ethnic tensions heightened in Sri Lanka, the community conceived of a separate organization for themselves, focused on more sociopolitical issues.[1] This group, known as the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada (TESOC), was registered as a nonprofit organization in 1978 with the late Nagaratnam Sivalingam serving as the first president.[2]

Following Black July 1983 in Sri Lanka and the heightening of ethnic conflict on the island, militancy would come to replace parliamentary politics, and tens of thousands of people, mostly Tamil, would leave the country over the next three decades (see table 3). Many of them would arrive in Canada. The post-1983 migration of Sri Lankan Tamils to Canada, composed primarily of individuals fleeing an increasingly brutal civil war, was distinct from the waves of Sri Lankans who had arrived in Canada prior to Black July. In the immediate aftermath of Black July, TESOC sprang into action and organized a meeting to discuss what could be done to help those suffering in Sri Lanka. The organization approached the Canadian government and was instrumental in bringing about a Special Measures Program for Sri Lanka beginning September 1, 1983 (Aruliah 1994; Adelman 1991).

In Canadian immigration policy, a Special Measures Program, generally used in cases of war rather than persecution, indicates that when people in Canada make family sponsorship claims for their first- and second-degree relatives, the claims will be considered by the visa officers in a more sympathetic way than would normally be the case. Going by the points system, a major shift in immigration policy instituted in 1967 that awards specific points to would-be applicants on the basis of various criteria, such as age, education, occupation, and whether or not the applicant has a kinship network already settled in Canada, those who are being sponsored generally received "bonus" points for having a relative in Canada but still had to achieve the minimum number of points in order to be admitted. When a Special Measures Program is in place for a particular country, points become less relevant.

TABLE 3. Number of refugee claims received by Canada from citizens of Sri Lanka, 1989–2012

Calendar year	Claims	Calendar year	Claims
1982	64	1998	2,385
1983	314	1999	2,661
1984	716	2000	2,794
1985	576	2001	2,812
1986	250	2002	1,606
1987	Unknown	2003	1,240
1988	Unknown	2004	1,131
1989	2,889	2005	857
1990	4,261	2006	860
1991	3,917	2007	788
1992	5,562	2008	1,012
1993	3,118	2009	821
1994	2,299	2010	1,171
1995	2,210	2011	635
1996	2,808	2012*	102
1997	2,466		
Total Claims, 1989–March 31, 2012: 52,325			

Sources: Girard 1990 (for 1982–86); Citizenship and Immigration Canada, special tabulation, August 2012 (for 1989–2012)
*January–March.

While a Special Measures Program was put in place for Sri Lanka in September 1983, leading to about 1,873 people arriving through the program, it was coupled with a new visa requirement for the country beginning on September 8, 1983 (Adelman 1991, 183, 214; see also Girard 1990, 115; Matas 1989, 73–76). Until 1983, individuals traveling from Sri Lanka to Canada did not need a visa. As Gerald E. Dirks (1995, 51) notes, "From time to time Canada has linked a visa requirement to its special humanitarian programs. When a refugee-producing situation arises in a particular country, like the ones that occurred in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Sri Lanka during the early and mid-1980s, Canada has promptly instituted a visa requirement for the nationals of that state in an attempt to prevent a self-selected movement of refugees from reaching this country." Many individuals and organizations in the Canadian public disagreed vehemently with this view. According to them, as Dirks (1995, 51) also notes, "truly frightened people, with well-founded fears of imprisonment or worse, could not afford to await the issuance of a Canadian visa by well-meaning but rigid officials." Raphael Girard, former director general of ref-

ugee affairs and settlement and head of the Refugee Determination Task Force from 1984 to 1989, similarly told me that the visa requirement was introduced to "prevent wholesale self-select migration, because if the doors are left open, it cannot be assured that only the real refugees will take advantage of unfettered access."

Prior to the Special Measures Program, Canadian immigration policy had already gone through significant changes. Until the mid-1960s, Canada received people from its traditional source regions—mostly Europe and the United States. Pressure to modify such policies had been building inside and outside the country from the late 1950s. As Dirks (1995, 10) has pointed out, the world was changing: "European empires had dissolved, giving rise to dozens of newly independent states in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Canada endeavored to establish and maintain good relations with these new governments. Having an immigration policy that in practice excluded nonwhites substantially impeded these efforts." Within Canada, interest groups ranging from churches to community organizations had also been criticizing Canadian immigration policy for its discriminatory elements.

In fact, from the end of World War II until 1962, immigration to Canada was mostly a matter of ministerial instruction and discretion. The "policy" at the time was largely based on a 1947 speech by Prime Minister Mackenzie King in the House of Commons, during which he argued that while Canada would encourage immigration, it would be careful to ensure that it did not change the "fundamental composition" of the country. As Michael Molloy, a former official with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the country's department responsible for concerns relating to immigration and citizenship, told me, "Immigration ministers would open the door or shut the door on the basis of whatever moved them, whether there were labor shortages or there was unemployment. There was no real structure. Visa officers were sent abroad and told to select people who made good immigrants or who have family here."

As international criticism over discriminatory aspects of Canadian immigration policies increased, particularly at the United Nations and within the Commonwealth, decisions were made to change the "White Canada immigration policy" (Knowles 2007, 187). On January 19, 1962, Ellen Fairclough, minister of citizenship and immigration, tabled new regulations in the House of Commons that eliminated "racial discrimination as a major feature of Canada's immigration policy" (Knowles 2007, 187). According to Molloy, even though the racially discriminatory policy was removed, it was not necessarily replaced with anything. Moving away, then, from an almost exclusive focus on the United States and Europe, the Canadian government began speaking of a "universal

immigration policy," one based on an "objective" standard by which immigration from all parts of the world could be facilitated.

In 1967 the government instituted the points system, part of a policy whereby the eligibility of applicants for landed immigrant status (called permanent residency after 1976) would be decided according to a new set of criteria. The points system effectively erased any formal discrimination embedded in the country's immigration policies (Dirks 1995, 11; see also Avery 1995, 238; Matas 1989, 39). The new system was the "hottest thing since sliced bread," Molloy recalled, "because nobody had ever managed to figure out how you can use one system for the people you *used* to favor, and the people you are *now* going to consider, and at the same time tie it to the labour market, so that the system doesn't run away." Molloy's last point is important, as, in 1966, the Immigration Department was separated from Citizenship and fused with the Manpower Department to form the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The move was indicative of the way in which immigration was now being conceived—as inextricably tied to the labor market and the needs of the Canadian economy (Dirks 1995, 11).

In 1970, members of the government discussed the pressing issue of refugee selection criteria—by then Canada had developed a more universal immigration policy and had also signed the UN's 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the 1967 Protocol. Out of these extended discussions arose what was known as Operational Memorandum 17, communicated to immigration officials around the world in January 1971. "When you are dealing with a person claiming to be a refugee, you have to first determine whether they meet the definition of a refugee according to the universal definition," Molloy explained when describing the content of the memorandum, "and, second, determine whether they are admissible—in other words, can you imagine them being successfully established in Canada?" In making these determinations, the memorandum notes that immigration officers are to use the points system, but the document also gives them the authority to overrule it, if necessary, in the case of asylum seekers. According to Molloy, the memorandum was the basis on which refugee selection for resettlement in Canada was determined from 1971 to 1978.

The Immigration Act of 1976

With these policies in place, the landscape of Canada began to change. To help deal more systematically with shifting demographics, Prime Minister Pierre

Trudeau appointed Robert Andras as the minister of manpower and immigration in November 1972. Andras got to work developing a new Canadian immigration policy and, after some years of public debate and drafting, the 1976 Immigration Act was born. The changes outlined in the act were so sweeping that it took the government two years to implement them. The act provided for four classes of admissible immigrants: family class, assisted relatives, independent immigrants, and refugees. Throughout the 1980s, the family class—generally defined as members of a nuclear family—has accounted for most of the immigration into Canada, including from Sri Lanka. The fact that the category did not accommodate distant relatives, who would otherwise be forced to qualify to enter the country based on more rigorous criteria, was a point of contention for many ethnic groups in Canada, which lobbied policy makers to extend the definition of family (Dirks 1995, 20–21).

While families seeking reunification had been a part of Canadian immigration policy since World War II, refugees had not been given firm statutory recognition prior to the 1976 act. With the act, refugees could effectively bypass the points system so long as they passed other mandatory health and criminal tests (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, 395). Changes in Canada's refugee policies paralleled the rising tide of global refugees fleeing civil wars as well as religious, ethnic, or political persecution. Between 1970 and 1993, the global refugee population increased from 2.5 million people to over 18 million, and the number of refugees selected for admission to Canada similarly rose from 7,300 in 1977 to 52,300 in 1991 (23 percent of the nation's total immigrant intake) (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, 381; see also DeVoretz, Pivnenko, and Beiser 2004).

With the 1976 Immigration Act, along with the refugee admission provisions, immigration officials were being pushed to reconsider the rigid parameters of what it meant to qualify as a refugee as established in the 1951 UN refugee convention (Dirks 1995, 24; Creese 1992, 127; Lanphier 1990). Scott Heatherington, a retired diplomat and former head of refugee affairs for the Immigration Department, explained to me that at the time there was a "recognition that there were special classes of people who were in circumstances where the refugee definition didn't help them. They were in refugee-like situations but would not meet the definition of a refugee." Shortly after the Special Measures Program was instituted for Sri Lanka, the Tamil Eelam Society continued to lobby the Canadian government to include Sri Lanka in the "designated class" category, which allowed people in "refugee-like situations" to gain entry into Canada. As one former member of TESOC recalled, "We were still not satisfied. We were pestering the government to include Sri Lanka as part of the designated class. You know that they are affected people, and there is a problem in Sri Lanka.

We encountered very sympathetic departmental members in External Affairs as well as in Immigration, but they wouldn't accept Sri Lankans as part of the designated class." When asked why TESOC's request was denied, Raphael Girard noted, "There was no standing population of Sri Lankans outside of the country that we felt had to be resettled in Canada. Sri Lankans were all over Western Europe, the United States, and Australia. This wasn't a resettlement movement that needed a designated class. Besides, we were getting a much bigger number than one would think our share would be from Sri Lanka, with which we really had very limited ties up until then." However, Tamils from Sri Lanka continued to arrive in Canada in large numbers throughout the 1980s.

While the Special Measures Program was integral in facilitating such an influx, the Tamil community also benefited from what scholars have called the "turbulent" 1980s in Canada, during which the refugee determination system underwent a period of instability set off in large part by the Supreme Court's *Singh* decision in April 1985. The case involved seven individuals who were attempting to claim convention refugee status based on fear of persecution in their countries of origin. Denied their claims, an appeal was brought to the Supreme Court. The court's decision altered the way refugee status is determined by granting those claiming refugee status nearly the same rights given to citizens, as established in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Knowles 2007, 226). The most significant of these was the right to an oral hearing before the Immigration Appeal Board (Knowles 2007, 226; Dirks 1995, 81; C. Anderson 2010).

The previous system had allowed people to appeal the decision on their refugee status but did not offer the option of an oral hearing. With the *Singh* decision's mandate for oral hearings for refugee claimants, the Immigration Appeal Board, which had a statutory limit of ten members, quickly became overwhelmed. As Raphael Girard told me, "Through the period of 1983 to 1989, the government was preoccupied with the breakdown of the refugee determination system. With the *Singh* decision in 1985, what had been a backlog of perhaps manageable proportion of claims quickly became totally unmanageable." Michael Molloy provided an apt summary of the problem at hand:

> The other system was pretty efficient. A group of people could take these transcripts home and read them and come in the next day and deal with ten or twelve cases in the course of a morning, because everybody had read it. They'd discuss it. They'd bang it back and forth. We had a safeguard in place where the tie always went to the refugee. With the IRB it became much more formalized. And instead of being able to deal with twelve cases at a session, you could get a refugee hearing going on for four

> or five days, tying up two judges, a case presentation officer, a court reporter, and the refugee's lawyer. The case presentation officer would study each case and present it: this is what we understand about this person. She's so and so. She comes from there. She does this. She claims this and that happened. And having presented that, then the lawyer would take the person through their story. So, it may be very fair, but like most things fair it's not fast. And so you've got at any time seven officials, plus a lawyer, tied up with one case, and the hearing might go on for an hour, it might go on for a morning, it might go on for a day, or it might go on for several days—depending on how complex it was. So all of a sudden, you need a hell of a lot more bureaucrats and decision makers involved, and the speed with which cases could go through the system dropped like a rock (but see also C. Anderson 2010, 951).

As such, the minister of employment and immigration, Flora Macdonald, asked Raphael Girard to convene a task force aimed at creating a formula through which Canada could uphold the principles of natural justice and conform to the Supreme Court decision and yet "allow some semblance of immigration control." Following the *Singh* decision, the government concluded that, with around sixty-three thousand refugee claimants in the system, it would simply be impossible to provide each of them with an oral hearing. In an attempt to rectify the situation officials held an administrative review in 1986, as a result of which refugee claimants who had arrived in the country before May 21, 1986, were allowed permanent residency after having passed a medical examination and a criminal background check (Knowles 2007, 226–227). The 1986 administrative review (ADR) was not popular with everyone at the time. As Girard stated,

> The *Singh* decision effectively brought removals to a halt from Canada. Anybody who would say, "I'm a convention refugee" could not be removed. You had a situation of the country being unable to remove anybody who didn't want to go. So the ADR came into effect. Stupid move. A blind, doctrinaire response from a minister who didn't understand the world of spontaneous migration, and for three years, we continued to accumulate cases of claims we couldn't process. The ADR solved some twenty thousand cases, but it didn't solve *the problem*. The problem was only tackled front-on when the new refugee determination system came into effect in 1989 (see also C. Anderson 2010, 953).

Girard went on to explain that it was likely that "the most numerous beneficiaries of the ADR were Sri Lankans because they were one of the bigger populations in the backlog. But it wasn't for them. It was simply to clear out the backlog of cases that we would never have time to deal with" (see also Aruliah 1994).

Even with the 1986 ADR helping to clear up some of the accumulating backlog of cases, the claims continued, and between 1986 and 1989 there were over 120,000 new claims, with a very high percentage of them from Sri Lanka. On December 28, 1988, Barbara McDougall, the minister of immigration, announced the Backlog Clearance Program, just before the revised refugee determination system was put into place on January 1, 1989, so that, as Girard told me, "the new system didn't start with a backlog of 125,000 claims." In 1988 there were 11,045 claimants from Sri Lanka in the backlog, making up about 9 percent of the total number (quoted in Mangat 1995, 41). In other words, while most policies were not put into place to directly address the influx of immigrants and asylum seekers from Sri Lanka, Tamil migrants nevertheless benefited from the period of "turbulence" that marked Canadian immigration and refugee determination in the 1980s. While Tamils arrived in Canada through all the classes of admissibility outlined in the 1976 Immigration Act, the family class and the convention refugee categories accounted for 56 percent of arrivals (around twenty-seven thousand people) between 1980 and 1993—benefiting greatly from the Special Measures Program as well as the 1986 and 1988 Backlog Clearance Programs (Aruliah 1994, 13). In 1989 the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board was created as part of the revised refugee determination system. From that year to 1998, Tamil refugee claimants had a success rate of 80 percent, while the overall average remained between 60 and 70 percent (Wayland 2003, 69; see table 3).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, tens of thousands of Tamils arrived in Canada and settled in large metropolitan cities like Toronto and Montreal. When I was growing up in the early 1990s, the "Tamil character" of municipalities like Scarborough was not readily apparent to me. However, by the late 1990s, the density of the Tamil population in Scarborough became a running joke among my friends. Dozens of weekly newspapers, television programs, businesses, restaurants, theaters, temples, and churches were established to serve the Tamil population, and Tamil language classes for the youth, as well as violent gangs, became increasingly prevalent. The concentration of the Tamil population in Toronto, as well as the broader transnational character of the city, is itself an important aspect of the political context that allows not only for diasporic identity formation but also political mobilization.

Based on their research among immigrants from Hong Kong, Valerie Preston and her colleagues point out that the single most important reason why immigrants moved to certain suburbs in Ontario was the presence of family and friends from Hong Kong. As diverse immigrant populations started to repaint the ethnic character of cities like Toronto, settlement services and

ethno-cultural organizations also became a well-developed element of these large cities (Preston, Kobayashi, and Siemiatycki 2006, 92). Indeed, between 2001 and 2006, seven out of ten immigrants to Canada chose to settle in Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. In 2006, about 46 percent of Toronto's population was foreign born, "higher than in Miami (40 percent), Sydney (31 percent), Los Angeles (31 percent), and New York (21 percent)" (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, 419).

In the Canadian Census data over the last several decades, people of Sri Lankan background are divided into three categories of ethnic origin: Sinhalese, Tamils, or Sri Lankans. Surprisingly, as also reflected in the 2006 Canadian Census, most people identified their ethnic origin as "Sri Lankan," even though it's not the term they would have chosen to identify with in Sri Lanka (Chandrasekere 2008, 2). The total population of those who chose "Sri Lankan" or "Tamil" as their ethnic origin, numbering around 138,000 people, is indeed smaller than community estimates, which often range from 200,000 to 300,000 Tamils in Canada. One reason suggested for this is that fewer new immigrants complete their census forms (Wayland 2003, 80). Included in the "Sri Lankan" category could be members of the Sinhalese community, Burghers, and Sri Lankan Muslims, as well as other minority groups on the island. Sarath Chandrasekere (2008, 18), for example, suggests that perhaps 5 percent of those who chose "Sri Lankan" as their ethnic origin are in fact Sinhalese-language speakers. However, as the vast majority of immigrants and refugees from Sri Lanka have been Tamil, we can be fairly certain that most of those who chose "Sri Lankan" as their ethnic origin are Tamil as well.

According to the census data, almost half of the Sri Lankan/Tamil population in Canada arrived when they were between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four. For the other age groups, the number of immigrants seems to be fairly consistent, ranging from 15 to 20 percent, with only 5.7 percent arriving when they were under the age of five. When considering the period of immigration, it is striking that the number of people who arrived before 1991, between 1996 and 2000, and between 2001 and 2006 remains remarkably consistent. Taking a step back, the census data also reveals that about 25 percent of the Sri Lankan/Tamil population were born in Canada, and of these individuals, 92 percent still live in their province of birth. The vast majority, 75 percent, are immigrants, with close to 80 percent of them having received Canadian citizenship.

Many of the older generation of Tamil migrants carried their language and their culture to Canada. After all, it was in part on the grounds of linguistic persecution that Sri Lankan Tamils had stood up to the government's Sinhala-only

policies. In Canada they attempted to speak Tamil at home with their children as well as send them to language training classes to ensure that they did not forget their mother tongue (Amarasingam 2008). However, they soon found it difficult to keep up, as their children were learning English at school and speaking mostly in English with their friends. A remarkable 30 percent of the Sri Lankan/Tamil population, according to the 2006 census data, speak only English at home. Looking closer at the age breakdown of this segment of the population reveals, perhaps unsurprisingly, that 57 percent of them are under the age of twenty-four. Most interestingly, if we assume that the "nonofficial language" that the Sri Lankan/Tamil population is speaking is Tamil, then around 63 percent still speak their mother tongue at home, while about 7 percent speak a mixture of English and Tamil. While I have provided a cursory examination of the broader policy changes that facilitated the arrival of Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada, as well as a survey of the more recent 2006 Canadian Census data, it is also necessary to explore some of the early organizational dynamics that developed from the 1980s to the present, as they provide important insights into the nature and character of post-2009 diaspora politics in Canada.

Political Organizing and Organizational Politics

The Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada was organizing itself as early as the late 1960s, well before waves of Tamils arrived following the pogrom of Black July 1983. But it wasn't until the establishment of TESOC in the late 1970s that organizing took a turn from cultural concerns to sociopolitical ones. Since then, the Tamil diaspora has been consistently active in creating lobby groups designed to influence Canadian foreign policy, as well as service-oriented organizations that seek to aid the Tamil community in Canada. Discussions about the creation of TESOC started shortly after the 1977 elections in Sri Lanka and the riots that occurred thereafter. The Sri Lankan government's dismal response to the rioting and the death of hundreds of Tamils on the island made clear to many in the diaspora community that they had to form an organization in Canada to lobby on their behalf. Shortly after the elections, the Sri Lankan minister of justice, Kanapathipillai William Devanayagam, was visiting Canada and held a meeting organized by a former Supreme Court judge who was then Sri Lankan high commissioner in Ottawa, H. W. Thambiah. According to an early member of TESOC, "I was not at that meeting, but I understood from people who spoke to me afterwards that it was not a good one, and that the high commissioner in particular and Minister Devanayagam had hinted at

consequences to people's families—people who had asked hard questions. This frankly outraged the community here."

Within a week or two, a town hall meeting was called and it was decided that an organization should be created in Canada that could provide support for the notion of "Tamil Eelam" as well as the Vaddukoddai Resolution, with its separatist platform. TESOC functioned throughout the late 1970s and gradually developed a very strong relationship with the Canadian government. Not only was TESOC instrumental in helping to institute the Special Measures Program for Sri Lanka in September 1983, but when a Tamil migrant ship unexpectedly arrived on the coast of Newfoundland in 1986, TESOC worked closely with the government in helping the migrants to get settled. As one early member described the episode, "We made one or two phone calls and we were on a plane to Newfoundland to bring them to Montreal and Toronto. Imagine, the government quickly facilitating this, giving us two planes, to bring all the people out of Newfoundland because there's no way they can sustain themselves there."

There was some controversy at the time with a number of community members, euphemistically identified as "Colombo Tamils," who were reluctant to join an organization that contained "Tamil Eelam" as part of its name, assuming that this reflected an expressed sympathy for separatism as well as Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka. A parallel organization that arose in part to differentiate themselves from TESOC was the Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities (SACEM), formally incorporated on November 25, 1983. According to many of my interview respondents, a point on which TESOC and SACEM differed was whether to provide support to the Tamil United Liberation Front and its 1976 Vaddukoddai Resolution. The use of the term "Ceylon Minorities" also caused backlash from some members of the Tamil community, who argued that Sri Lankan Tamils were not a minority but a nation unto themselves. As one early member of SACEM pointed out, "We didn't choose the name from *that* perspective. We chose it because at that time, we wanted to include Muslims from Sri Lanka also." While TESOC and SACEM engaged in similar projects, there was very little inclination from either party to work together. In an attempt to account for the tension, a former member of SACEM pointed out that there was a sense of "elitism" among some members of SACEM that precluded any joint initiatives with TESOC. As he recalled,

> The thing is, SACEM included a number of the individuals who came in the 1970s, and while they were willing to help the newcomers, they were not particularly fond of them [*laughs*]. They thought of them as interlopers and saw themselves as the elite, ignoring the rather limited evidence that substantiated this perception. They also

> had this particular mindset and looked down on the new crowd. They didn't much like the independence struggle back home. These are people who came in the 1970s when the situation was much better in Sri Lanka, and they sort of viewed the struggle through that particular lens. . . . I remember having a spirited discussion with one of these people who arrived earlier, and he was railing against the crime in the community and pointing out that before these so-called refugees came, there was no crime [*laughs*], completely oblivious to the fact that he was comparing the incidence of crime in a community that was previously composed of approximately four hundred families against a current strength of fifty thousand to one hundred thousand people. So that's the kind of attitude we were dealing with [*laughs*].

SACEM, while failing to develop as strong a relationship with the Canadian government as TESOC, succeeded in providing some much-needed help to the early Tamil immigrants who arrived in Canada. Both organizations would begin to focus many of their efforts on settlement issues as the immigrant and refugee influx increased. As an early member of SACEM recalled, "After the 1983 riots, people started coming here, and those days the main problem was there was no shelter where they could stay. Nowadays, when anybody comes, there are already family members here to help them. But in 1983, very few Tamils were here." One of SACEM's major projects in the early 1980s was the building of what came to be known as the Tamil Co-op Homes, currently located in the west end of Toronto. With the completion of this cooperative housing project in 1984, the organization submitted a grant application to the city of Toronto, in order to have one of the units within the co-op allocated for new arrivals. As one former member of SACEM pointed out,

> With that grant, we rented an apartment within the Tamil Co-op Homes and had refugees from Sri Lanka stay in it for three or four months until they found their feet. And they basically stayed there free of charge until they got their Social Insurance Number, their work permit, etc. And then we also helped them, once they started earning some money, moving them out and finding them other accommodations so that they could move on with their lives. . . . SACEM in later years failed to submit a valid proposal to the city and lost the grant as well as the apartment.

A third organization, created in 1986, was the World Tamil Movement (WTM). Very little of any substance has been written about the organization, and many members have been reluctant to talk on the record about what exactly the group set out to do (see Bell 2004). According to most of my respondents, however, WTM was the Canadian arm of the LTTE and was tasked with not only raising money for the Tigers but also keeping alive the sentiment of Tamil nationalism

in the diaspora. In interviews with members of TESOC, SACEM, and almost all other early Tamil organizations in the diaspora, it became clear that WTM, right from its founding, attempted to make inroads into these groups, or at least to dictate the parameters of the conversation taking place in diaspora organizations with respect to the conflict in Sri Lanka. Indeed, the LTTE seems to have realized fairly early on that the diaspora community around the world would be an invaluable resource not only for providing financial assistance but also for organizing demonstrations and lobbying for international intervention when needed. Even in the early 1990s, the Tamil community in Canada held conferences, organized protests attended by thousands, and engaged in lobbying efforts on behalf of the LTTE and the social movement it represented (Wayland 2003, 71; see also Chalk 1999; Levy 1995). When I asked a former member of TESOC about the influence of WTM on the organization, he responded, "WTM was in the background. We never knew their role or what they were doing or anything like that. We didn't know *what* they were doing. Whether they were in the money-collection business or what." Another early member of TESOC told me, "We began confronting after a while the inroads of the World Tamil Movement, who began to even infiltrate the Tamil Eelam Society and got people elected or appointed who began to dominate the organization. Now, this is not a very good experience for a democratic organization. I understand their motivations, which is that they thought we were not doing enough to advocate for Tamil Eelam. From my perspective, it was more that they wanted to control the community. The takeover of the organization was pretty successfully done."

Even with WTM encroachment, both TESOC and SACEM continued with much of their activities. Following the 1988 Backlog Clearance Program, TESOC approached the Canadian government and, as one former member explained it, "told them that we wanted to provide the settlement services ourselves." In 1990 TESOC was formally converted from a sociocultural and advocacy group into a settlement organization and began to receive funding from the Canadian government. The organization began focusing much of its efforts on running computer training sessions as well as language classes for new arrivals. As government funding arrived, according to some respondents, there was also increased interest from WTM. As one of the early members of TESOC lamented, "I regret converting TESOC into a settlement organization. I regret it now, looking back. Because it's an advocacy group. Until 1990, there was no money in the society. It was all completely voluntary. When the money came into it, then there was *severe* interest from WTM. That's when I left." TESOC's reputation would also be detrimentally affected by events in Sri Lanka. Following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, international opinion changed with respect to the LTTE.

TABLE 4. Funding received by the Tamil Eelam Society of Canada from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 1998–2013

Fiscal year	Total funding	Fiscal year	Total funding
1998/1999	$2,016,719	2006/2007	$1,642,998
1999/2000	$2,151,266	2007/2008	$1,859,785
2000/2001	$1,860,832	2008/2009	$2,038,953
2001/2002	$1,479,293	2009/2010	$2,231,279
2002/2003	$1,187,165	2010/2011	$2,329,587
2003/2004	$787,766	2011/2012	$1,956,400
2004/2005	$885,993	2012/2013	$481,936*
2005/2006	$1,033,721		
	Total:	$23,943,693	

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Note: Information on funding prior to the 1998 fiscal year is unavailable.
*Partial fiscal year; figure is for information available as of July 24, 2012.

"Everything changed after the murder," one former member of TESOC recalled. "The External Affairs office basically locked the door and threw away the key for the Tamil community."

SACEM was also undergoing similar changes in the mid-1990s. The organization's focus had shifted from providing shelter for new arrivals to issues of settlement and integration. As one member pointed out, "The need is no longer shelter, but health, youth education, and integration with the mainstream. Those are the issues we face. So we had many seminars. One of the seminars was on volunteerism and was done in conjunction with five Tamil organizations in Canada. We organized other seminars on addiction, Internet and computer skills, youth violence and career issues for youth, and so on." In 1991, one of the seminars organized by SACEM was to help foster small businesses in the Tamil community. At that seminar, a special committee to deal solely with businesses, entrepreneurship, and volunteerism was established. This special committee went on to function independently as the Canadian Tamil Chamber of Commerce, largely under the leadership and guidance of the late Joseph Augustine Jeyanathan. The chamber is currently one of the premier organizations dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship and volunteerism in the Canadian Tamil community. SACEM, especially in the 2000s, rarely engaged in diaspora politics or political lobbying, and it continues its mandate as a service-oriented organization. In 2008, SACEM, while preserving the acronym, officially changed its name to Society for the Aid of Community Empowerment.

Another organization that formed in the late 1980s was the Tamil Resource

Centre (TRC), a small leftist group made up largely of former militants who were expelled from groups like the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization and the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam by the LTTE. Started in Canada in 1989, the TRC to this day functions rather independently from other diaspora organizations and is highly critical of both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. As one of the founding members told me, when the group started "the LTTE front organizations were forcing people to give them money and forcing them to adopt their views. So we didn't accept that and said we were fighting for the alternative views for the people. Also, we are based on human rights, and we criticized any militant movement which turned against the people. And we were also criticizing the government." The purpose of the organization was to bring about an "alternative voice," and while many members of the TRC were part of militant movements in Sri Lanka, they forcefully denounced the human rights violations of the LTTE. As such, they soon received threats from LTTE supporters in the diaspora. Their offices and their library were twice—in 1989 and in 1994—targeted by arsonists.

In 1994 the TRC publicly mourned the death of Sabaratnam Sabalingam, a journalist killed by LTTE supporters in Paris for writing an "exposé" about Prabhakaran (Sivaram 1994). A few weeks after the TRC event, its library in Toronto, containing some three thousand rare manuscripts, was burned to the ground. While it is deeply critical of the LTTE, the TRC has attempted to highlight the pluralism of the Tamil community through its Thedaham library, Thedal journal, and Thavani theater, as well as study circles and seminars. When the Canadian government banned the LTTE in 2006, the TRC, perhaps surprisingly, organized a meeting criticizing the ban. It argued that the Canadian government was wrong to take sides. As one member of the TRC told me, "Canada should remain neutral, or ban both sides, since the Sri Lankan government is practicing state terrorism against the people as well." The TRC no longer has an office, and its membership today stands at about twenty people. Current members have argued that since they are highly critical of the LTTE, widespread support has been out of reach. They point out that in order to become leaders in the Tamil diaspora in Canada, you have to be *selectively* critical of human rights violations and manipulate public opinion. "We are not willing to do that just to achieve a leadership position," one member said.

With the number of Tamil diaspora organizations steadily increasing, an effort was made in the early 1990s to form an umbrella organization. In 1992, TESOC, SACEM, WTM, and seven other organizations came together to form the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils (FACT).[3] The president of FACT would be chosen, every six months, from one of the constituent organizations.

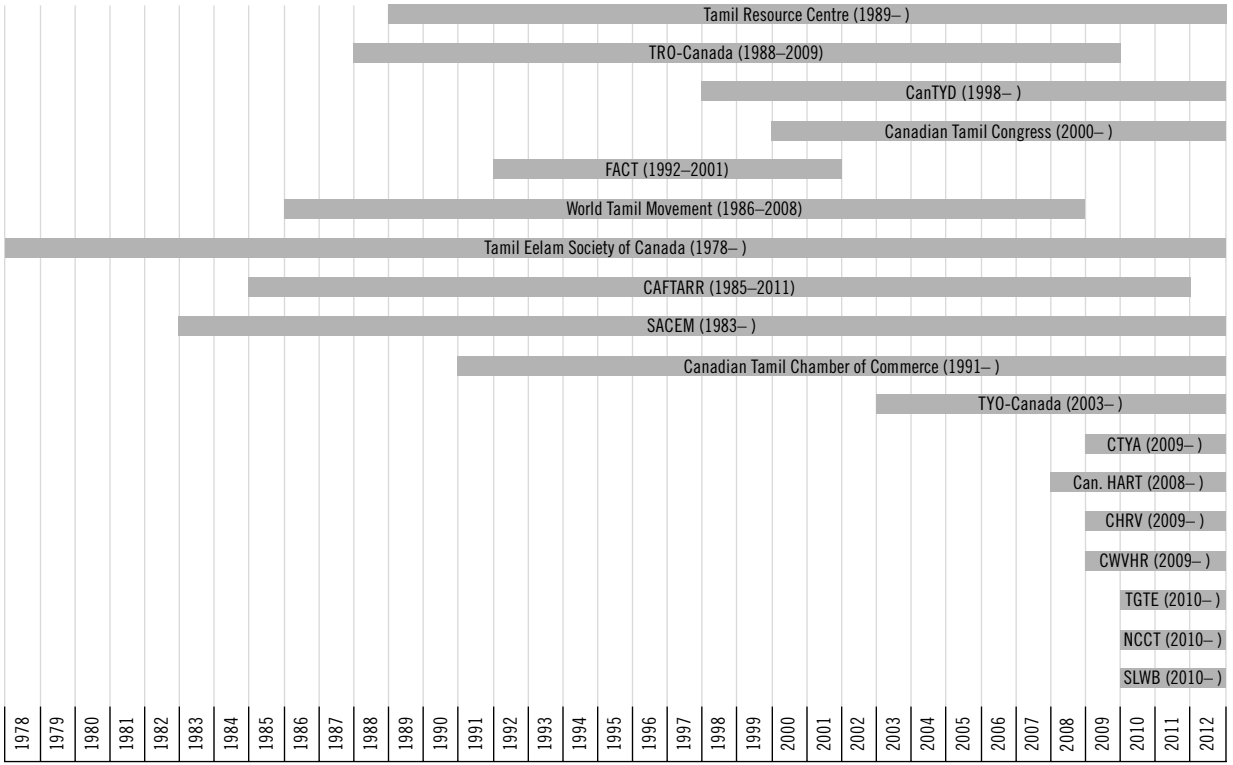

FIGURE 1. Some of the major advocacy and service organizations in Canada

Not all of the organizations listed in this chart could be discussed in this book. Those not discussed include the Canadian branch of the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO-Canada), the Canadian Foundation for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation (CAFTARR), Canadian Humanitarian Appeal for the Relief of Tamils (Canadian HART), Canadian Human Rights Voice (CHRV), the Canadian Tamil Youth Association (CTYA), and the Centre for War Victims and Human Rights (CWVHR). There are also dozens of alumni associations and home-village associations that operate in Canada and are simply too numerous to name.

While each group maintained its own identity, they worked together whenever there was a common cause. The main goal of FACT was to have an organization that could presumably speak on behalf of the whole Tamil community in Canada. According to many respondents, by the early 1990s, both TESOC and SACEM had many members who were sympathetic to WTM as well as the notion of a separate Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. When asked why SACEM joined FACT, one former member of SACEM told me,

> At that time, essentially, SACEM's board had been taken over by the recent arrivals, and there was only one or two left of the old guard. So the recent arrivals were either Tiger supporters or those who, while against the tactics of the Tigers, accepted them as the only saviors of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Or they recognized that FACT was basically a mouthpiece of the Tigers. And people *liked* that, and they felt like that under the circumstances it was the way to go. It wasn't necessarily "WTM people." They were just people who believed on a personal basis that salvation for the Tamils in Sri Lanka is via the Tigers. And showing a united front to the Canadian government would have considerable benefits for the struggle over there. They all believed that. And even if some of them had misgivings over some of the tactics of the Tigers, they swallowed those misgivings, feeling that a united front would give us considerable political benefits.

In 1990 the Tigers sent one of their veteran operatives, Manickavasagam Suresh, to Toronto (Bell 2004, 37). "He was the man responsible for the entire running of the World Tamil Movement," a former leader of FACT recalled. "He's the key man. He came as a refugee, and his appointment was probably made by the Tigers." Suresh was arrested on October 18, 1995, on charges of being a member of an organization that engages in terrorism. After his arrest, FACT and WTM started a Free Suresh campaign that portrayed him as a political prisoner and a human rights activist (Bell 2004, 55). At the time, the LTTE was not classified as a terrorist organization in Canada, but according to one respondent who was heavily involved in the Free Suresh campaign, "the Canadian government had unofficially declared the LTTE as a terrorist organization, which we were not aware of at the time."

After a heated legal battle, Suresh was declared a danger to Canadian security and a deportation order was issued in 1997 (Bell 2004, 56). After his case was appealed, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on January 11, 2002, that "the appellant Suresh made a *prima facie* case showing a substantial risk of torture if deported to Sri Lanka, and that his hearing did not provide the procedural safeguards required to protect his right not to be expelled to a risk of torture or death. This means that the case must be remanded to the Minister for re-

consideration. The immediate result is that Suresh will remain in Canada until his new hearing is complete" (*Suresh v. Canada* 2002). As of this writing, more than a full decade after the Supreme Court decision, Suresh is still in Canada, and by most accounts, his status in the country will remain in limbo for the foreseeable future.

Although the Canadian government's stance on the LTTE had already begun to change following the Tigers' decision, in April 1995, to withdraw from peace talks, it wasn't until April 2006 that the LTTE was officially proscribed as a terrorist organization in Canada (Stackhouse 1995). One year later, in April 2007, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) raided the offices of WTM and hauled away several boxes filled with documents. The RCMP investigation, known as Project Osaluki, was one of numerous similar probes launched in the United States, France, and Great Britain to weaken diaspora networks engaged in fund-raising for the LTTE. Investigative journalist Stewart Bell (2007) reported on the incident, discovering that, in their raid on WTM offices, "Police found Tamil Tiger flags, manuals on missile guidance systems, books encouraging suicide bombings and paperwork they claim is evidence of terrorist fundraising. Also seized were 'comprehensive lists' of ethnic Tamils living in Canada that showed the amount of money each had donated. Lists of business donors and cancelled cheques to the WTM were found as well, many of them in excess of $10,000." Following the raid and the ensuing investigation, the World Tamil Movement was also banned, as a terrorist organization, in June 2008 for its role as a "known and leading front organization for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam." The Canadian government concluded that "the World Tamil Movement was created in 1986 and became a known and leading front organization for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Canada. The leadership of the WTM acts at the direction of the LTTE and has been instrumental in fund-raising in Canada on behalf of the LTTE. WTM representatives canvas for donations amongst the Canadian Tamil population, and have been involved in acts of intimidation and extortion to secure funds" (Public Safety Canada 2008).

As the World Tamil Movement increasingly came under the scrutiny of the Canadian government, FACT and its constituent organizations also experienced heightened attention. The U.S. State Department had identified both organizations as "front groups" for the LTTE, which it had designated a foreign terrorist organization in 1997. While FACT spokespersons were quoted in newspapers throughout the 1990s as representatives of the Tamil community in Canada, the organization underwent a public beating following its annual fund-raising dinner on May 6, 2000. The dinner, organized yearly to raise funds for the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization in Sri Lanka, was attended by federal finance

minister Paul Martin and by Maria Minna, the minister for international cooperation. Following the dinner, both Martin and Minna were heavily criticized in the media for attending an event hosted by a "terrorist front" organization. John Thompson, the director of the Mackenzie Institute, published an article in the *Ottawa Citizen* titled "Dining with Tamil Terrorists" in which he asked, "Would Paul Martin and Maria Minna accept a dinner invite from the IRA or the Mafia?" (Thompson 2000).

With negative attention on the rise, a meeting was convened in late 2000 to discuss the future of FACT. As one member who was present at the meeting recalled, an announcement was made that "the activities of FACT had been interdicted/stayed. When I asked for the reasons I was told that it was on the advice of some Liberal members of Parliament who were of the opinion that FACT is considered a front organization of the LTTE by governments, including the U.S. State Department. This was of course true. That was the last time anything was heard about FACT." What precisely occurred after FACT was put on hold seems to be a matter of some debate. According to former members of FACT, the Canadian Tamil Congress was created as a replacement in October of that year and was initially envisioned as a broader umbrella organization in the diaspora community.

Most early members of the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), however, vehemently disagree with the characterization that CTC was created to replace FACT. They note, for example, that planning with respect to CTC had begun months prior to the decline of FACT and that this planning took place without any communication or consultation with members of FACT. Many of those I spoke with explained that while the timing of the collapse of FACT and the birth of CTC do indeed coincide—both occurred in mid-2000s—it would be grossly inaccurate to then conclude that one was created to replace the other. The birth of CTC, they insist, has its roots not in FACT but in the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre (CanTYD), an organization that arose in response to a period of heightened gang violence for the Tamil community in Toronto in the late 1990s.

A bloody war between rival gangs—AK Kannan in the east end of Toronto and the VVT (named for the Sri Lankan town of Valvettithurai) in the west end—had led to the deaths of dozens of Tamil youth that decade. As one of the founders of CanTYD told me later, "Basically, we didn't want any more shootings in the community. We didn't want youth, especially, to spoil their future . . . and as recent graduates, we felt that we were able to provide the leadership to the youth at that point in time and then take initiative." On December 27, 1997, Kapilan Palasanthiran, a first-year physics major at the University of Waterloo, was shot dead at a doughnut shop in Toronto that was known as a hangout

spot for members of the AK Kannan gang. Palasanthiran's death became a rallying cry for the community and, according to one of the founders of CanTYD, was very much in the media and "gave us the initial push to do something urgently and immediately" to address the issue (Edwards and Yum 1997). As such, CanTYD was founded in February 1998 by about seventeen Tamil youth in Toronto. Tamil gang violence began to decline in Toronto in the early 2000s following the arrest and subsequent issuance of deportation orders for several gang leaders as part of Project 1050, a joint police and immigration investigation in Toronto. A report by the *Toronto Star* noted that the investigation "ended with the arrest of close to 51 alleged gang members on October 18, 2001. The majority of the accused were charged under a section of the immigration act that prohibits involvement in a criminal organization, marking the first time street gangs were classified as 'organized crime' under immigration laws" (Shephard 2006).

While CanTYD was successful in addressing many of the issues that Tamil youth were facing at the time, the community as a whole had many other concerns as well. The founders of CTC felt that the Tamil community lacked a strong organization that could advocate, from a rights-based approach, on behalf of the Tamil community in Canada and that organizations like FACT did not have the tools to perform this much-needed role. As one respondent noted, "The youth issue was a smaller issue and the community issues were bigger issues, but by the time that we had formed CanTYD and then had rallied a lot of youth together to get involved, we had enough resources within the community and we had identified enough resources to say that we could actually try and tackle some of the other, bigger issues that we as a community were facing. So most of the people that were initially part of CanTYD also became cofounders of CTC."

While it was created in 2000, CTC did not receive widespread support from the Tamil community in Canada at the time, and it went through a period of dormancy between 2004 and 2005. Explaining why CTC was initially unpopular, one recent member pointed out, "I guess at that point the community was so focused on just pumping all of their energy and resources into the homeland struggle alone. So I'm not sure if the community was ready for a concept like CTC." In 2005 CTC experienced a kind of rebirth, and by many accounts it functions today as the leading mainstream organization advocating for the Tamil community in Canada (see Moy 2011).

However, the accusation that CTC was once closely associated with FACT and WTM has often "tainted" the organization, and some in the diaspora as well as in Sri Lanka continue to argue that CTC is an LTTE front organization. Follow-

ing CTC's annual charity walk-a-thon in 2011, for instance, the *Sunday Observer* (2012) in Sri Lanka lambasted Amnesty International for accepting donations from "an LTTE front group." Amnesty International issued a statement stating that the CTC's donations "in no way impair the independence of Amnesty International—which is nonpartisan and works on human rights issues around the globe" (Amnesty International 2012). CTC would continue to have a strong influence on diaspora politics in the postwar period, as would the Tamil Youth Organization (TYO), a transnational youth network of sorts that seems to have arisen following visits made by Tamil youth from around the world to the Vanni region during the 2002 peace process. These youth met with the leadership of the LTTE and returned to their respective countries with the expressed purpose of mobilizing young Tamils and keeping nationalist sentiment alive in the diaspora.

TYO-Canada was started in 2003, and at times it recruits members from Tamil Students' Associations (TSAs) at universities around Ontario, attempting to influence TSAs' agendas in the process. Leading up to May 2009, TSAs around Ontario held fasts, awareness campaigns, and mini demonstrations at their respective campuses. While many in the community accuse TYO of "radicalizing the youth," it, to be fair, openly expresses a commitment to Canadian society and Canadian values. Members also feel that they have a duty to ensure that Tamil youth do not forget their past, particularly the many sacrifices made throughout the war. This sentiment can be traced to Prabhakaran's November 27, 2008, Heroes' Day speech, during which he stated, "I would also take this opportunity to express my affection and my praise to our Tamil youth living outside our homeland for the prominent and committed role they play in actively contributing towards the liberation of our nation" (TamilNet 2008b). Many youth in the diaspora believe that Prabhakaran foresaw the imminent defeat of the LTTE, or at least was offering an admission that the armed conflict phase of the movement had done everything possible, and that he passed the torch of the liberation struggle to them during this speech.

After the end of the war in May 2009, the organizations that began to emerge in Canada were making two distinct appeals—some called for reconciliation while others professed to continue the struggle for self-determination. Sri Lankans without Borders (SLWB), falling into the first category, was awarded over $250,000 in July 2011 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada to support its mandate to "promote dialogue, reconciliation, and peace in the diaspora community in Canada" (Sri Lankans without Borders 2012). The organization has been roundly criticized by many members of the Tamil diaspora, however, for using the language of reconciliation to gloss over serious human rights violations and to deemphasize the need for justice and accountability.

One of the leading organizations carrying forward the torch of self-determination is the National Council of Canadian Tamils (NCCT), which arose in 2010 with the expressed purpose of serving as an ethnic lobby group in Canada. The NCCT wishes to serve the needs of the Canadian Tamil diaspora but is plagued by widespread suspicion in the community. As a few of its early organizers were pegged as former members of WTM, the NCCT is believed by some in the Tamil community to be simply a rebranding of WTM after it was listed as a terrorist organization in Canada. Another accusation often levied against the NCCT is that it was designed to directly compete with the Canadian Tamil Congress. CTC was viewed by some early NCCT organizers as elitist and out of touch with the grassroots Tamil population in Canada. As of this book's publication, a kind of "cold war" still persists between the NCCT and the CTC.

To more formally express their commitment to the self-determination of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, the NCCT and TYO organized an Eelam Tamil Youth Conference on February 26, 2012, which took place at Toronto city hall (TamilNet 2012b). As TamilNet (2012b) reported, student activists who attended the conference "reaffirmed the principles enshrined in the Vaddukoddai Declaration of 1976, the Thimpu Declaration of 1985 and upheld the Tamil Sovereignty Cognition declaration released on Heroes Day last year as a conceptual reference point." The Tamil Sovereignty Cognition declaration, released in November 2011, attempts to carve out a strong position for the continued commitment to the self-determination of the Tamil people and is largely a response to the specific strand of discourse surrounding reconciliation that has arisen in the diaspora since the end of the war in May 2009.

Reaffirming its commitment to the Tamil Sovereignty Cognition declaration, the conference organized by the NCCT and TYO in February 2012 brought together representatives from fourteen TSAs in high schools, colleges, and universities in Canada. At the end of the conference, the representatives passed nine resolutions (TamilNet 2012b). While these resolutions reiterated much of what was already present in the declaration, there are two additions, which, I argue, may prove to be increasingly significant for the future of diaspora politics, especially for Tamil youth identity in Canada. They are:

1. We reject the territorial integrity of the Sri Lankan state that occupies Tamil Eelam and we reject the imposition of the "Sri Lankan" identity, politically and culturally on the Eelam Tamils.
2. We will boycott any Tamil Diaspora organization that compromise the principles of Homeland, Nation and Self Determination and therefore lends legitimacy to the unitary state of Sri Lanka.

Events similar to the Eelam Tamil Youth Conference took place throughout 2012 in France (May), Germany (July), and Italy (August) (TamilNet 2012a).

Members of the NCCT and TYO in Canada have also criticized the diaspora for *only* lobbying for an independent inquiry into alleged war crimes that took place in the final months of the war. The argument, in other words, states that the continued push for investigations on the part of the diaspora *inadvertently privileges* discourses presenting the conflict in Sri Lanka as a civil war between a majority and a minority. As the resolutions above point out, the NCCT and TYO categorically reject any conversation that takes as an unstated assumption or starting point the unitary state of Sri Lanka. This approach, they argue, is a fundamental waste of time and resources and should be abandoned by diaspora activists. Instead, the conflict is in fact one *between* two nations, which can be resolved only through a two-state solution, or by radically reforming how Sri Lanka, as a unitary state, currently functions.

If the first step in reorienting the strategies and goals of Tamil youth in the diaspora took place in February 2012 with the conference at Toronto's city hall, then the logical second step took place in April in the United Kingdom. The April meeting attempted to once again bring together representatives from TYOs around the world to agree on a more unified mandate going forward. The Global Tamil Youth League (GTYL), a coalition of TYOs from various countries, adopted a resolution at their April meeting that called for "the establishment of an independent, international mechanism to ensure truth, accountability, and justice," while also resolving to work toward a "political solution that recognizes the uncompromising, fundamental principles of the Tamil freedom struggle," to "raise awareness about the ongoing multi-faceted genocide" of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, and to "promote the identity of the Tamil nation" (Tamil Guardian 2012b).

The resolution was adopted by respective TYO groups in Canada, Germany, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While it is not entirely accurate to view GTYL as "giving orders" to its constituent TYO members, who then transmit these orders to the TSAs of various countries, GTYL does seem to want to refocus much of the political activity undertaken by its members and the diaspora community as a whole around the issue of self-determination. GTYL is open to dialogue, but with certain intellectual parameters in place; it is dedicated to mobilization, but with a single goal in mind. As such, some TSAs in Canada have often felt that they cannot speak freely and cannot ask a full range of questions about Tamil identity or Sri Lankan history.

Members of the Tamil diaspora in Canada, then—many of whom fled an in-

creasingly brutal civil war in Sri Lanka and who were aided after their arrival by legislative shifts in Canadian immigration and refugee policy—have also been a deeply politicized community consistently involved in the politics of their country of origin. It should be clear from our discussion thus far of the pre-2009 periods and of some postwar diaspora politics that Tamil demonstrations, organizational dynamics, and identity politics did not begin after the end of the military conflict. The next two chapters examine this transition in much more detail, focusing first on the significance of Tamil diaspora mobilization during the final months of the war and, second, on a particularly novel post-2009 diaspora organization, the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam, arguing that a close study of the organization reveals much about what post-LTTE diaspora politics will look like.

CHAPTER THREE

Taking to the Streets

Diaspora Mobilization, Frame Wars, and the 2009 Protests

In April 2012 Canadians celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Adopted on April 17, 1982, as a key element of the Constitution Act, which established Canada as the sole guardian of its Constitution, the charter introduced a needed legal instrument to Canadian liberal democracy by providing the constitutional guarantee of fundamental freedoms and basic rights, including democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, and equality and language rights for all people living in Canada (Whyte 2012). The charter has been used in service of a wide array of social movements, particularly through the enforcement of the equal rights section, to challenge or overturn many laws that the courts felt went against the rights laid out in the document.

Steered by political organizing efforts from such movements, cases over the years have, for example, significantly limited police powers, enhanced women's reproductive rights, recognized the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, given Francophones outside of Quebec access to French schools and hospitals, strengthened aboriginal rights, and heightened judicial activism (Schwartz 2012; Smith 1999). Significant for our current purposes, Section 2 of the charter enshrines, as "fundamental freedoms" of all Canadians, (a) the freedom of conscience and religion, (b) the freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication, (c) the freedom of peaceful assembly, and (d) the freedom of association. The "political opportunity structure" that has developed as a result of the charter in Canada, in other words, is open and welcoming to many social movements and has shaped their ability to mobilize. Given an understanding of the formation of diaspora as a product of social mobilization, it could be argued that political opportunities indeed allow for the political formation of diaspora communities as well.

The concept of the "political opportunity structure," a component of the political process approach to the study of social movements, has been the subject of much debate in the field of social movement studies. Scholarly thinking about

the importance of political contexts in relation to social change and protest began in the 1960s with the work of Charles Tilly. Tilly showed that while studying the motivations and strategic choices of protesters is significant, it is equally important to grasp how changing political climates and state structures influenced the scope of choices available for movement activists as well as how they articulated their objectives and organized around them (Meyer and Minkoff 2004; Kitschelt 1986; Eisinger 1973; Tilly 1964; McCarthy, Britt, and Wolfson 1991). With respect to Sri Lanka, a key example of this was the passage of the Sixth Amendment, outlawing support for a separate state and requiring all members of Parliament to take an oath of allegiance to the unitary state of Sri Lanka. Such policies inadvertently aided the rise of Tamil militancy on the island.

Critics of the "political opportunities"/"political opportunity structure" approach argue that it lacks conceptual clarity, is overly structural, and is too broadly applied to be useful as a research tool (Goodwin and Jasper 1999). One of the main criticisms presented against the approach is that academics have stretched and adapted it to suit a variety of needs. Political opportunity has, since its conception, been expanded to include cultural opportunities, organizational opportunities, transnational opportunities, international opportunities, discursive opportunities, emotional opportunities, and so on (Jasper 2012; Guenther 2009; della Porta and Tarrow 2004, 2007; Koopmans 2004; Koopmans and Olzak 2004; McAdam 1996). Edwin Amenta and Drew Halfmann (2012, 232) argue that the "problem with the concept is not that it is too structural, but that it is unclear whether it is structural or not." Their suggestion that discussion of political opportunities/political opportunity structure should be abandoned in favor of a broader understanding of "political contexts" aligns well with an understanding of the protests organized by the Tamil community in Canada during the final months of the war—many of these protests addressed a rather understudied corollary to political opportunity, namely "threat" or what is sometimes called the "threat/opportunity spiral" (see Wright 2007; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).

Opportunity at Home, Threat Abroad?

The political process approach to the study of social movements has identified three broad sets of factors that research has shown to be important in the emergence and growth of social movements (McAdam 1999; Tarrow 2004; Tilly 1978). The first, already mentioned, is the attribution of opportunity (or threat) by movement activists. The second and third factors are the "mobilizing struc-

tures" (networks or organizations) that are already available to activists during the initial phase of mobilization and "framing processes," which provide the interpretive and cognitive tools that are important for individuals' movement involvement. While political opportunity can be defined as the perceived probability that an act of protest will successfully attain its objective, threat, on the other hand, can be defined in terms of what is at risk for a group in proceeding with an act of protest, or the consequences involved if they choose not to act (Goldstone and Tilly 2001, 183).

While threat attribution has traditionally received less scholarly attention than discussions of political opportunity or political context, recent scholars have argued that threat and opportunity often work hand in hand. For instance, changes within the state may be perceived as threatening to certain segments of the population. These segments may take to the streets, receive support from some politicians or nongovernmental organizations, and perceive an opportunity to better address their grievances. The moderate success of the movement could in turn be perceived as threatening by the state, which might initiate a campaign of repression against the protestors. This cycle—termed the "threat/opportunity spiral"—may continue in this way for some time. The threat/opportunity spiral, according to Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (2001, 243), is a mechanism that operates "through sequences of environmental change, interpretation of that change, action and counteraction, repeated as one action alters another actor's environment." In the meantime, out of this sustained confrontation a movement's identity becomes increasingly crystallized, individual consciousness of movement membership is heightened, and goals are more clearly articulated.

While threat and opportunity enjoy a symbiotic kind of relationship, threat should not be mistaken for the opposite of opportunity but instead should be viewed as a factor independent of opportunity that plays an important role in the actions of both social movements and the state when struggles arise (Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Wright 2007). While the literature on threat is relatively scarce, and while there is no real consensus on the relationship between opportunity and threat, introducing diaspora formation into the mix certainly complicates the matter a little further. Diaspora politics effectively stretch the geographic boundaries of the opportunity/threat spiral, consideration of which has hitherto been limited to the interaction between elites and citizens within the borders of a particular nation-state.

In the case of the Tamil diaspora, for example, the attribution of opportunity is related to *Tamil emigrants' own* potential for mobilization in their host countries. The attribution of threat, on the other hand, is related to the Sri Lankan

government's treatment of *their kin*. In other words, the diasporic political context allows *us to mobilize here* to raise awareness about the threat faced by *our friends and family over there* (Tarrow 2005; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Carmin and Hicks 2002). This complicates matters in important ways (see Jasper 2012, 23). On the one hand, in the Canadian context, the country's policy of multiculturalism encourages and protects cultural and political differences. Indeed, as Canadian multiculturalism has evolved, immigrants have increasingly found ways to sustain transnational identities (Wong and Satzewich 2006). On the other hand, while the entrenchment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has certainly meant that new opportunities for activism are available to social movements, Miriam Smith, in her study of lesbian and gay movements in Canada, has found that it has also "shaped the nature of state-centred demands, the overall frame in which demands are situated, the mobilizing structures of movements, and the specific state-directed strategies they employ" (Smith 1999, 15). As Smith (1999, 16) argues, the charter "reshaped the mobilizing structures as well as the meaning frame" of the movement. This happened only partially in the Tamil community, during their period of initial mobilization from December 2008 to May 2009, and partly explains the ambivalence with which both Canadians and many in the Tamil community came to see the protests. In important ways, the nature of the opportunity available to the diaspora community in a particular country may not facilitate *the kind of* mobilization required to adequately resist the threat faced by their kith and kin in the "home" country.

The Tamil protests that took place on the streets of Toronto, Ottawa, and elsewhere from January to May 2009 were an especially important episode in diaspora politics. Occurring as they did during the final months of the war in Sri Lanka, it proved to be a deeply emotional and painful time for many participants, planting the seeds of their future activism in Canada and setting the tone for much of the discussion that followed in the diaspora. The mobilizing structures and framing processes that were part of the protests over those five months in 2009 influenced what Doug McAdam, in his attempt to synthesize the various competing approaches to political opportunity, has identified as "elite" alignment and involvement. McAdam's widely cited list of four factors of political opportunity is as follows (McAdam 1996, 27):

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity
3. The presence or absence of elite allies
4. The state's capacity and propensity for repression

James Jasper later recast McAdam's four factors in more "strategic language," which helps inform the examination of Tamil community mobilization. In Jasper's (2012, 21) reformulation of McAdam's four factors:

> The first (openness) is about which players are allowed to play in what arenas, according to the official rules. (Although much of the action is about how excluded players influence arenas in unofficial ways.) Numbers two and three (elite alignment and potential allies), which are often difficult to distinguish, are choices made by other players (unhelpfully lumped together as "elites") that help or hinder protestors. The fourth factor (repression) consists of two nested factors: the *capacity* for repression is mostly due to resources (tear gas, tanks, guns, and so on); the *propensity* for repression reflects the strategic decisions and perspectives of those with the capacity.

The question of whether mobilizing structures and framing processes also affect the state's capacity and propensity for repression presents itself as well. In other words, can the strategic and symbolic choices made by a social movement in order to gain support within its own community give rise to constraints in the political context or the "closing" of opportunity? The relationship that mobilizing structures and framing processes have with McAdam's and Jasper's conceptualization of political opportunity is key to understanding the internal dynamics of the Tamil community and how the broader Canadian context opens up, but also constrains, different kinds of mobilization.

Mobilizing Structures and Political Context in the Tamil Protest

After full-scale war broke out again between Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE in 2006, there was initially very little reaction from the Tamil diaspora in Canada. The Tigers had fought these wars many times before and had experienced setbacks. The LTTE leaders, and the World Tamil Movement (WTM) in Canada, had not directly asked the diaspora for anything more than financial support, despite offers from many in the diaspora to organize protests and initiate lobbying efforts. Diaspora activists were informed that the LTTE could sustain itself as long as they provided the financial support. Indeed, hundreds of millions of dollars were given by the Tamil diaspora around the world, allowing the LTTE to maintain an active navy, air force, and army. According to many in the diaspora with whom I spoke at length, this changed in early 2009, and the LTTE realized it needed a cease-fire in order to regroup before continuing the fighting. Tamil leaders in the diaspora and LTTE "front" organizations around the world were asked to help. Although the World Tamil Movement was banned in

Canada in June 2008, many of its former members are still very much active in diaspora politics.

As the war reached its final months beginning in January 2009, many in the Tamil diaspora took to the streets. In major cities around the world—Toronto, Ottawa, Paris, London, and so on—Tamil people, young and old, gathered in public spaces emotionally chanting slogans and the names of people and places that many in the broader mainstream community perhaps had not heard before. The committed organizing of many of these protests began in December 2008 and continued until the end of the conflict. Many of the Tamil youth who attended the protests in Canadian cities through the five months in 2009 were not always sure which organization was responsible for them. Neither did they have any idea about the heated debates that took place behind the scenes, the personal animosities among the various organizers, and the organizational rivalries that at times bubbled to the surface. Only those youth who were closely involved with organizing the protests, as well as law enforcement officials, seemed knowledgeable about many of these matters. One of the earliest protests held on the streets of Toronto was the formation of a "human chain" on January 30, 2009, that was attended, according to most accounts, by at least thirty thousand Tamils. As the CBC (2009) reported at the time, "Thousands of protesters flooded onto one of Toronto's busiest downtown streets at rush hour on Friday in opposition to a Sri Lankan government offensive aimed at crushing the separatist Tamil Tigers. The protesters formed a human chain outside Union Station, a main transit point for commuters catching trains, subways and buses out of the downtown core. The flood of protesters and commuter traffic clogged the area as the rally began to disperse at 6 p.m."

One of the leading organizers of the human chain protest is a former member of the World Tamil Movement who is still heavily involved in diaspora politics. The meeting during which the idea for the human chain was fleshed out, he said, was particularly disorganized and revealed unrealistic initial expectations:

> I asked the people, "What do you want to do?" There was a guy, he was from Tamil Nadu, and he said, "A human chain protest." He was the one who put forward the idea of a human chain protest. I knew how difficult it would be to organize, so I asked the people when they wanted it to happen. It was a Monday, and I proposed that we have it on Friday. Everyone said, "No, no, no." I said, "What do you mean no, no, no?" They said, "No, we want it tomorrow morning." This is Monday night and they want it Tuesday morning. I laughed and everything, but I said, fine, we have about three hundred people here, so let's divide up the responsibilities. I asked, "How many

> thousands of people will come?" They said fifty thousand people. I told them that what they need to do is go to everybody's home, knock on their doors, and let these people know that they are going to come to the streets tomorrow instead of going to work. Then they started thinking. Then I said, "You said fifty thousand people, so I want to give one out of five a placard." And I said, "I need ten thousand placards." Okay? So, a group of people need to take the responsibility for writing the slogans on the placards, and another set of people are going to go and wake up all the Tamil printers, and bring them in, and start printing. And then I asked, "How many thousand people come to Toronto every day?" I said about 1.5 million come to Toronto every day. So I don't need 1.5 million flyers, I need about one hundred thousand flyers. I told them that somebody needs to take charge, write the flyer material, take it to the same printers, and make sure you have one hundred thousand flyers by the morning. Then I asked, "Who is taking on which responsibility?" Nobody moved [*laughs*]. Then I asked, "So do you still want it tomorrow?" One voice spoke up and said, "No, Friday." Now everybody was happy with Friday [*laughs*]. I told them that they are now making sense. I was still panicking with Friday, since there was a lot that needed to be done.

The second human chain protest took place on March 16, 2009, and was easily attended by tens of thousands of people from the Tamil community. As Leslie Ferenc (2009) reported for the *Toronto Star*, "A sea of protesters flying Canadian and Tamil Eelam flags stood shoulder to shoulder, in some places three and four deep, along busy downtown streets yesterday, saying they were there to speak for those in their homeland of Sri Lanka who cannot. . . . Demonstrators, among them seniors, families with young children, and students, chanted 'We want justice. We want it now' and 'Free our leader.'" While the first human chain protest was noticeably absent of any LTTE flags or chants about the Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, the second human chain protest included thousands of LTTE and Canadian flags. According to one of the organizers, the presence of the LTTE flag can be seen as a strategic blunder, but it was largely outside of their control, because many community members were going to bring them to the protests regardless of what they were told. The organizers attempted to smooth out the bad optics by also ordering several thousand Canadian flags. As the organizer told me, "It's beyond our control; people want to bring their flags. Rather than criticizing and debating about it, we can only try to limit the damage. . . . We know that the people aren't going to bring Canadian flags on their own. So we ordered three thousand flags and gave it to the people at the second human chain. . . . So, how can we limit the damage? Think outside the box. Bring the Canadian flags also. Otherwise, it's a nightmare scenario."

The presence of the LTTE flags at the protests became an important ongoing discussion among Tamil community members throughout the period of the demonstrations. For many, the flag signified their identity as well as their commitment to the LTTE, which was fighting for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. For others, it was a strategic mistake since the LTTE was proscribed as a terrorist organization in Canada. By most accounts, the second human chain event, attended by forty to fifty thousand people, attracted Tamils who were not entirely favorable to the LTTE but still felt the need to stand alongside fellow members of the community. Even as it slowly became known that WTM was taking a leading role in organizing various demonstrations, many people came because they did not know how else to contribute. Quite a few of those I spoke with were deeply upset and angry with the conduct of WTM, both during the protests and afterward. As one respondent involved with the protests explained,

> WTM wanted to make the point that the people are with them or with the LTTE. That was not the case. However, that's how it was looked at by the outside world. The flag and even the placards that read "Prabhakaran, Our Leader" and everything. Even though the majority of people didn't want to say it, they were just there. Apparently they didn't have any say about it. So purely because of sympathy and passion for the people who were dying there, people came. . . . To bluntly say it, WTM's motive has never been to save the Tamil people. Of course, if the Tamil people are saved, they are happy, but their main motive was simply to save the LTTE cadres, as it has been all along. For them, the goal is to save or to free the land, not the people. That was quite visible during the protest. The freeing [of] the land, according to them, will automatically free the people.

The organizing of the protests was led by diaspora groups like WTM, the Tamil Youth Organization (TYO), the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC), and home-village associations, as well as a host of Tamil student associations at university campuses in Canada. Home-village associations (*ur sankangkal* in Tamil) are basically community collectives in Canada that bring together individuals from a specific village or city in Sri Lanka for get-togethers, summer picnics, or winter festivities (Cheran 2007). They also at times aid in fund-raising for community centers, temples, or schools in their respective villages or cities in Sri Lanka. There are about 200–250 home-village associations in Canada, with each consisting of about fifty to one hundred families. At some of the early protest organizational meetings, certain individuals were tasked with getting in touch with the home-village associations. These individuals were given the names and phone numbers of home-village association presidents and secretaries and told to urge their members to attend the protests. Information about

the protests was also disseminated through the numerous Tamil radio stations, television stations, and newspapers in the Toronto area.

Even as many organizations and social networks were involved in the organizational aspects of the protests, almost everyone I spoke with noted that the two organizations that spent the most time and energy in organizing the protests were the World Tamil Movement and the Tamil Youth Organization. The Canadian Tamil Congress was also intimately involved in the early stages but began to limit its involvement after the February 4 demonstration in Ottawa. As one CTC member told me,

> We did organize protests up until February 4, 2009. That was the largest protest we had, in Ottawa. Several thousand people participated. Thirty-three elected officials came and spoke at the event. And the same day, we had the debate inside the Parliament for the very first time historically. It's an achievement, I would call it. Never in the House of Commons in Canada have they debated the Tamil issue. . . . That was the last time we organized a protest. The reason is because after that the [LTTE] flags started coming out. The flag waving started, and it was not appealing to the politicians. We also didn't want to damage the good relationship between the politicians and the organization [CTC], so we stopped organizing the protests.

Another member of CTC similarly complained that this strong "elite alignment"—in that the major federal political parties in Canada debated the end of the conflict in the House of Commons and were quite favorable to underlying Tamil grievances—began to dissipate not only with the steady introduction of the LTTE flags at the demonstrations but also because of the aggressiveness with which the demonstrators began interacting with those in power. Following a discussion about the February 4 protest, he went on to say,

> What you see from that moment onward, pretty much the following week, is the emergence of the flag. And I think our tactics also changed. To a large extent, we lost a lot of sympathy and the demonstrations took on a life of their own. And you'll see over time that mainstream politicians sort of tuned out, to a point where none of them actually showed up. . . . I think we lost the average Canadian. And we lost them because I think we, instead of really making this a Canadian issue, we blamed Canada, like we sort of pointed the finger at Canada for what happened. . . . We came to a point where we were threatening Canadian politicians, and we were saying, you know, we're giving you the opportunity to come and speak to us and we'll put the flag down for an hour and then we're going to raise it again, and you know the whole rhetoric, right? I think it was a miserable failure on our part. But there are two issues. I think in terms of mobilizing the people it was a great success; but in terms of actu-

> ally having an effect on policy I think it was a failure. And we need to reflect on that and, you know, we need to figure out how we can best move forward and ensure that we become or we continue to be an effective lobby.

Preexisting organizations and social networks have always been important factors in successful mobilization and political lobbying (Robinson 2004; Kriesi 1996). As sociologist John McCarthy (1996, 141) points out, these mobilizing structures are "the range of everyday life micromobilization structural social locations that are not aimed primarily at movement mobilization, but where mobilization may be generated: these include family units, friendship networks, voluntary associations, work units, and elements of the state structure itself." In addition to these, one can add social movement organizations—like WTM, TYO, CTC, and so on—as well as other interpersonal networks (Rucht 1996). The notion of mobilizing structures is intimately connected to theorizing about political opportunities/threats as well as framing practices (McCarthy 1996). Indeed, with the example of the Tamil demonstrations, a mobilizing structure such as the World Tamil Movement was in itself a "frame" that aided in the closing of certain "elite alignments" or "opportunities." WTM had been proscribed as a front organization of the LTTE in 2008, and as its involvement in the protests became common knowledge, the posture of politicians and law enforcement officials toward the demonstrations changed accordingly.

Members of Parliament did not want to risk public ridicule by attending demonstrations where the LTTE flag was displayed prominently. A memorable incident in this vein occurred on March 5, 2009, when Gurbax Malhi, the Liberal MP for Bramlea-Gore-Malton, attended a demonstration in Ottawa where numerous LTTE flags were prominently displayed. As Stewart Bell (2009) reported in the *National Post*, "During Question Period, Peter Kent, the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs said he was sickened by the pandering of a Liberal member on the front lawn of Parliament to a flagrant display of the symbols of a listed terrorist organization." Political commentators also pounced, and the story made national headlines. Malhi later issued a statement clarifying his position on the rally and the LTTE, which read, "I deeply regret that my attendance at this rally was misunderstood by some as a demonstration of my support (expressed or implied) of terror, or of a terrorist organization. There is no excuse for terrorism and attacks on civilians, and the world has to show its concern for the protection of the civilian population" (quoted in Bell 2009). According to some Tamil organizational leaders I spoke with, after the Malhi controversy, it became increasingly difficult to urge members of Parliament to speak at demonstrations. But as the protests matured in size and organizational

capability, it also became more difficult to convince demonstrators to retire the LTTE flag.

According to one of the early organizers of the demonstrations, it seemed as if law enforcement officials were not overtly concerned about WTM involvement in the organizing of some of the protests. In fact, they may not have known of WTM's involvement until well into April 2009. According to him, they knew WTM was involved "because of the flags and Prabhakaran's picture and, apparently, it leaked slowly that they are behind it. But even so, the politicians were willing to come and speak, but the flag and the picture was a problem for them. Several times, they spoke to me about it. Politicians or their secretaries would come and say, 'Remove the flags, remove Prabhakaran's picture, remove accusations of state terrorism, as well as the language of genocide.'" As time progressed, two noticeable developments emerged. First, the demonstrations began to progress on their momentum, while many mainstream politicians tuned out. Second, organizational rivalries surfaced between groups like WTM and TYO, which were happy to see the demonstrations continue on their own momentum at the grassroots level, and other groups like CTC, which thought it unwise to so easily lose the ear of politicians and those in power. Indeed, in one interview a member of WTM made it clear that CTC did not provide the leadership the people demanded during the demonstrations. Taking on the role of devil's advocate, I suggested that perhaps CTC thought it more effective to whisper into the ears of those in power than to stand on the streets, screaming at no one in particular. My respondent countered that this was irrelevant, because as a community organization, it is CTC's responsibility to satisfy the needs of the Tamil people in Canada. If it could not do this, he argued, it needed to get out of the way. Tamil youth who attended many of the protests repeatedly stated that they did not like these kinds of organizational rivalries and personal animosities. They lamented that the Tamil community in Canada could not put aside their differences, even when the Tamil people in Sri Lanka needed them most.

The notion of *mobilizing structures* is not without its critics. Many scholars have criticized the concept for being overly structural, much like its counterpart, the *political opportunity structure*. It is not enough, and at times it is even misleading, to assume that individuals who are part of some movement "structure" get involved in social movement activism for no other reason than the fact that they already know someone who is involved (McAdam 2003, 286). While this is indeed an important critique, many Tamil youth I spoke with admitted that they in fact knew little about Sri Lankan history or politics before the protests and that they attended the protests simply because "it was the thing to do" at the time or because they were part of a Tamil student association on their

campus, which was organizing more local demonstrations around Ontario. The "creative cultural work" often took place *afterward*. In other words, they would *first* attend the protest, for a variety of possible reasons, and *then* go home to read about Sri Lankan history or the rise of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka. During this learning process, the operative frames at the demonstrations would be incorporated into their individual identity and sustain their state of mobilization (Munson 2008).

Framing Processes and Framing Wars

In addition to mobilizing structures, framing strategies and tactics are equally if not more significant in the effects they may have on political opportunity or the openness of the political context. The concept of framing has increasingly become an integral part of social movement scholars' efforts to understand mobilization. It goes without saying that there are hundreds of social movements that are not always successful in attracting a following. Similarly, there are countless individuals and groups whose grievances and injustices do not result in sustained periods of contention. As Noakes and Johnston (2005, 1) point out, perhaps the fundamental lesson that all students of social movements must learn is that "injustice is much more common and much more persistent than collective efforts to oppose it." Not only that, but broader contextual concepts like political opportunities and mobilizing structures do not provide a full explanation for how and why social movements emerge or why activists get involved with them.

In short, movements have often failed to perceive "openings" in the opportunity structure, have been shown to exaggerate an opening or to perceive one when one does not exist, and have at times been successful on the strength of an idea alone, irrespective of the political context (Kenney 2005; Barker and Lavalette 2002; Gamson and Meyer 1996). In most cases, as Doug McAdam, John McCarthy, and Mayer Zald (1996, 5) argue, "If the combination of political opportunities and mobilizing structures affords groups a certain structural potential for action, they remain, in the absence of one other factor, insufficient to account for collective action. Mediating between opportunity, organization, and action are the shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation." It is to better articulate these shared meanings that David Snow and his colleagues have, in applying Erving Goffman's (1974) notion of a "frame" to social movement studies, called for more scholarly attention to *frame processes*. As such, social movements are seen not "merely as carriers of extant

ideas and meanings that grow automatically out of structural arrangements, unanticipated events, or existing ideologies" (Benford and Snow 2000, 613). Rather, social movements are constantly engaged in "meaning work"—the construction and maintenance of significant symbolic ideas and meanings—and its communication to movement supporters, enemies, and observers.

According to Snow and Benford (1992, 137), a frame is an "interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment." Irrespective of political opportunities and mobilizing structures, potential movement participants "must be convinced that an injustice has occurred, persuaded that collective action is called for, and motivated to act if a social movement is to occur" (Noakes and Johnston 2005, 2). As such, the forging of effective "collective action frames" depends on a variety of factors. Snow and Benford (1988) characterize frames as containing three basic characteristics: a diagnostic element, which, similar to a doctor's diagnosis, explains what it is that needs fixing and why; a prognostic element, which offers a way to resolve that which was diagnosed; and a motivational element, which compels people to seek collective action (see also della Porta and Diani 2006, 74–79).

While Snow and Benford's threefold frame characteristics have been influential in the field of social movement studies, William Gamson's alternative list has also received some scholarly attention for its inclusion of an "injustice" element, which, according to Gamson, "places the blame for grievances on the individuals or institutions that compose the 'them' and sparks the members of the 'we' to respond" (Gamson 1992, 7–8). Alongside the conceptualization of injustice, it is necessary to have the idea that there is a "we" and a "them" and that the "we" has the agency to enact change. Gamson's more social-psychological approach focuses on the meaning systems and symbolic resources that are available to movement participants. While there are certainly examples of collective action that don't fall into the categorization of injustice frames, such as self-help movements and religious movements, the Tamil demonstrations did indeed have at their center an injustice component (Benford and Snow 2000, 615). In many ways, the entire protest campaign can be seen through the injustice lens, variously articulated through frames based on the language of genocide, war crimes, and historical mistreatment of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka by the Sinhala majority.

The construction of effective collective action frames is not an easy task for movement leaders and organizers. During the Tamil demonstrations, movement leaders could not expect, for example, that current and potential activists knew

the history of Sri Lanka, or even knew about the historical injustices committed against the Tamil people on the island. After Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, numerous historical events occurred that would later be pinpointed and emphasized (i.e., presented as frames) as specific cases of the mistreatment of Tamils on the island. A key element of the 2009 demonstrations was to clearly articulate the diagnostic frame as an ongoing genocide of the Tamil people. Historical events such as passage of the Sinhala Only Act, the numerous riots and pogroms, the burning of the Jaffna library, and Black July served to undergird the frame that held that what was occurring in 2009 was not an isolated injustice but one with many precedents. These events, despite the fact that they were separated by decades and occurred under different political parties and leaders, were dragged into the heated present, stripped of nuance, and made to serve as exhibits and signposts in the injustice arguments constructed and told at particular demonstrations. Many Tamil youth I spoke with were introduced to "Sri Lankan history" through these episodic, and now highly emotionalized, historical flashpoints. In this sense, the selection and emphasis of certain frames is necessarily a decontextualizing and dehistoricizing process.

While many frames were constructed and used at the Tamil demonstrations, the genocide frame best exemplifies how social movements attempt to deal with the enormously important issue of *frame resonance*. Along with the prognostic frames, often expressed in chants of "We Want Tamil Eelam" and "Tamil Tigers: Freedom Fighters," these articulations, as suggested above, provide a window into the struggles movements often experience in connecting to current and potential recruits as well as to "elites" and the broader public. The vast majority of those I interviewed believed that a systematic genocide of the Tamil people or Tamil identity had occurred, and continues to occur, in Sri Lanka. As this was simply taken for granted by many of my respondents, they often would give very short answers to my questions about genocide and await the next question. It was only when I challenged their responses that they offered a more sustained reflection. One Tamil man, for example, noted,

> Basically I think what is happening there is the destruction of the Tamil being. So from language, culture, to the structural genocide that we saw in the 1980s to the actual killing that happened in the '90s and 2000s, it is a continuum.
>
> **Interviewer:** *Do you believe that the Sri Lankan government intended . . . was there a systematic attempt to wipe out Tamils or is it a war on the* LTTE *during which Tamils happened to die?*
>
> First off, I don't think there is a difference in terms of the LTTE and Tamils. Especially in the context of the Vanni population because of the fact that thirty-five

> thousand LTTE cadres came from that area and even if you would associate five to six people per cadre you are looking at about two hundred thousand people, so it is the Tamils that were fighting the Sri Lankan government and therefore it was a war against the Tamils as much as against the LTTE. Secondly, if you are looking at whether it was a fallout of the Sri Lankan government's war against the LTTE, I categorically deny that because of the fact that when three hundred thousand people are sort of shepherded into an area that is smaller than half of Scarborough [a municipality within Toronto] and when forty thousand soldiers are just pounding it, you are not just picking targets and then fighting the LTTE. If you also look at what happened after the war, it clearly shows that it was not necessarily a war against the LTTE. If the Sri Lankan government would have stopped with ten thousand or twelve thousand cadres being arrested or detained, if they would have let the Tamil people go back to their homeland, if they did not start bulldozing the martyr cemeteries, if they did not start building temples for the Buddha all over the Vanni area, when people are homeless and struggling, then you would have had an argument saying that this was not a war against Tamils but the LTTE alone. So what is happening now is beyond the cultural genocide, and beyond actual genocide. What they are trying to now do is Sinhalize the whole Vanni area. What they are now trying to do is instill their values and their culture and their religion on Tamil people and therefore in the long term convert everybody into a Sinhala person.

The genocide frame was indeed part of the political consciousness of many who attended the protests (Gamson 1992), but it was also a strategic choice by many of the organizers of the Tamil demonstrations, who understood that it would resonate with a Canadian audience accustomed to hearing about the Holocaust and the genocides in Darfur and Rwanda (Benford and Snow 2000, 622). Enormous posters depicting Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa appeared beside portraits of Adolf Hitler, placards calling for support of Tamil sovereignty, and pictures of malnourished children, all aimed at linking what was, to be sure, an obscure conflict in Sri Lanka with issues that many "mainstream" Canadians would find familiar and more straightforward to interpret (Gamson 1992, 135; see also Halfmann and Young 2010; Sawer 2007; Jasper 1997, 159–162). Movements customarily repackage these images and metaphors for their own purposes, with varying results. Whatever their level of success, all movement participants attempt to have their message resonate with the broader public with whom they are communicating and from whom they are seeking support. Two characteristics of frame resonance—what Snow and Bedford (1992) term "credibility of the frame's promoters" and "narrative fidelity"—come into play when looking at how the LTTE flag, to take just one example, became a

TABLE 5. Tamil youths' ($N = 69$) responses to the question "Do you think there was a genocide in Sri Lanka?" (percentages)

Yes	81	No	13	Don't know	6

point of contention among organizers as well as among many of those who took part in the protests. The debate about the flag and how it affected the overall goals—"resonance" being one—of the demonstrations continued to elicit much anger and frustration months after the end of the campaign. For most of those I interviewed, the presence of the LTTE flag negatively affected the "credibility of the frame's promoters" by linking everyone at the demonstration with the Tamil Tigers, which naturally began to overshadow all other framing strategies and color how the broader public came to see such strategies.

There was also a sense that the LTTE flag had no cultural compatibility or even relevance to what the Tamil community was asking for from Canadians. The notion of "cultural compatibility" refers to the question of "whether the collective action frame and the symbols used to carry it synchronize with society's cultural stock—and especially the 'cultural tool kit' of the target audience" (Noakes and Johnston 2005, 15). Similarly, the quality of "relevance" is the capacity of a frame to make sense of what is occurring in the lives of a movement's target audience (Noakes and Johnston 2005, 15). According to many I spoke with, getting the Canadian public to focus on Sri Lanka is difficult enough without introducing the LTTE flag, a symbol that most Canadians may not have seen before, would not know how to interpret, and, as such, that might lead them to tune out the demonstrations as a whole. The LTTE flag, in other words, functioned in exactly the opposite of the way that a frame should: to serve as an opening through which the uninitiated can be brought into the larger social movement and connect with its injustices, grievances, and ultimate goals. In many ways, then, the LTTE flag, portraits of Prabhakaran, and certain chants served as "self-othering" mechanisms that alienated many Canadians who might have supported the Tamil demonstrations had more "culturally compatible" frames—like human rights—been allowed to predominate (della Porta and Diani 2006, 85). According to many respondents, this strategic blunder was significant in damaging the elite alignments that the Tamil community had built up previously.

Frames, however, do not operate in a vacuum. They are shaped by political opportunities and in turn are instrumental in either the emergence or the blocking of political opportunities (Noakes and Johnston 2005, 20). So while

the earlier demonstrations had hosted many politicians who spoke supportively of the Tamil plight, and even helped to bring about an emergency debate on Sri Lanka in the House of Commons, according to many of the organizers, changes in the tone, manner, and symbols of the demonstrations brought along a closure of opportunities. In order to better articulate the relationship between political opportunities and framing processes, some recent scholarship in social movements has led to theorizing about "discursive opportunity structures" or "discursive fields" (McCammon et al. 2007; Koopmans and Olzak 2004; Gamson 2004; Snow 2004, 401–404; Koopmans and Statham 1999; Steinberg 1998, 1999; Gamson and Meyer 1996; Spillman 1995). William Gamson and David Meyer (1996), for example, argue that at times there may be opportunistic openings in public opinion or the national mood, which activists may find useful (see also della Porta and Diani 2006, 219–220).

Central to theories of discursive opportunities or fields is that it is the public sphere that mediates between movement action and political context. What most people know about politics and world events comes from the media, what they read online, and what they discuss with their friends and colleagues, not from some insider knowledge of the way politics works (Koopmans and Olzak 2004, 201). The political assumptions and normative beliefs that exist in a given country's public sphere are important in determining whether certain social movements, and their framing strategies, garner widespread sympathy and support. Ruud Koopmans and Susan Olzak (2004, 202) define discursive opportunities as "the aspects of the public discourse that determine a message's chances of diffusion in the public sphere." In the post-9/11 context, an ever-present feature of the public sphere in Western states is the discourse on terrorism, along with certain assumptions about who engages in it, what it looks like, and what it hopes to accomplish.

Following the end of the Cold War, as Thomas Olesen (2011, 7) points out, it was widely believed that world politics "might now be guided by a set of universalistic ideals and frames in which the protection of the individual's (human) rights would take precedence over narrow national and power strategic concerns." This assumption, he goes on to write, was "halted and largely reversed" by the events of 9/11. The reemphasis on terrorism and securitization has indeed influenced the effectiveness of several social movements, from peace activism to any kind of social movement activity that may impinge on the state's security concerns (Gibson 2011). As security increasingly becomes one of the primary lenses through which a state engages with its citizens and the outside world, the "discursive space" available to certain social movements rapidly closes. As Olesen (2011, 7) argues, "The potency of securitization springs from two factors:

first, the state's virtual monopoly over security, and second, the fact that frames regarding threat protection have a privileged position in public debate because of a perceived common interest that cuts across social, economic and cultural divides in a populace. Under these conditions, activists become vulnerable to criticism that portrays them as unpatriotic and/or naïve."

Most Tamil youth, as well as protest organizers, whom I spoke with continued to express deeply ambivalent reactions to the presence of the LTTE flag. They seemed to have experienced firsthand the steady closing of political opportunities as well as the changing mood regarding the discursive fields on which they were making their case to the outside world. The LTTE flag, as prominent as it was on the streets of Toronto, was not an ideal point of entry for mainstream Canadians, who may have had only a vague sense of the civil war in Sri Lanka. However, as many respondents pointed out, the presence of the flag was largely outside the control of many of the organizers. According to them, many in the community would have brought the flag regardless of what they were told and would have ultimately been angry with the organizers had they insisted that the flags be left at home. One Tamil man insisted that the flag was not brought to the demonstrations solely by organizations, although they were integral, but by a whole host of people from the Tamil community who may or may not have had organizational ties. As he noted, "I have friends who have taken the flag, and who were passionate about demanding that we take the flag. So it was not just the organizations. I wouldn't say that, but the organizations have more responsibility. They obviously, by providing the leadership, can at least represent most of the people, if not all of them, right? So that is where they failed, and TYO is one of them, and the other organizations were also equal in their responsibility."

Many respondents noted that the LTTE flag was used in many intramovement framing contests, which divided the community along the middle (Wiktorowicz 2004). While social movements often like to project themselves as a unified group, this is rarely the case. Even as many movements agree on the overall goal, there is often disagreement within their ranks when it comes to how to achieve that goal and the incremental steps that come with it (Benford 1993, 678). Social movement organizations devote enormous amounts of time and energy to constructing their message, selling it, and defending it from misconceptions, but as Robert Benford contends in his study of the nuclear disarmament movement, "Consensus within and among a movement's organizations regarding such interpretive matters is at best tenuous and more often than not absent" (Benford 1993, 678; see also Hunt, Benford, and Snow 1994). As one respondent noted, the flag became one of the central issues of the dem-

onstrations because organizers realized that they needed it to attract some participants from the Tamil community. However, they also realized that this was ultimately a risky gamble. As he stated,

> The main reason why, from a volume perspective, those protests were so effective was because you were drawing people out because you were tugging at their hearts and you can't strategize emotion, so for a lot of these people, these protests were literally all that they had and you can't expect them to curtail that. You can't expect them to marginalize their emotions by leaving out the flag. So yeah, it was a strategic mistake but I don't think you could've gotten around it and been nearly as effective. The protests were a coping mechanism. But ultimately it was a Catch-22. The message was still sent out that would've otherwise not been sent out if that many people hadn't shown up, and if it hadn't gone on as persistently as it did for as long as it did. . . . Even if you told everybody you can't bring that flag, if you told them ten times, there would still be flags out there and more importantly, there would be a lot of pissed-off people, that they weren't allowed to bring the flag.

Even as many of the respondents argued that the presence of the LTTE flag was a strategic mistake, this did not automatically mean that they were anti-LTTE. Rather, they pointed out that different symbols and frames could have been used for the purposes of the demonstrations. As one Tamil woman noted, while she supports the LTTE, she also recognizes that the Tiger flag may have created the impression that the focus of the demonstrations had shifted.

> I didn't see why some would carry around a flag of the Tigers. I'm not against the Tigers, but I think that if you look at it, if I was a non-Tamil and I walked by and I saw a Tiger flag, I think I would dismiss the protest, right? So putting myself in a third person's shoes, not Tamil, and who doesn't understand the historical importance and development of the Tigers, I think just trying to be diplomatic, I didn't agree that some people were saying, "Yeh! The Tigers." I think it's not really about that. I think if people had phrased it more about human rights and more about innocent lives being lost, it might have had a better impact.

When asked what he liked and disliked about the demonstrations, a Tamil man from Toronto similarly pointed out,

> What did I like about the protests? It is the people. It's just the mere fact that old women, children, youth, seniors, anybody and everybody were able to rally round an issue that was about, I don't know how many thousands of miles away and be out there day in, day out disregarding all their day-to-day activities, putting everything on hold for a while, and braving the cold weather and the snowstorms. . . . What I did

> not like about it was the fact that we conveniently gave the Sri Lankan government and the international community a reason to refocus the issue from what it should have been. What the focus should have been is what was happening in Sri Lanka. Not the flags, not the highways, not the rallies. They were just a way for the Tamil community to ask for help or to demand action, but you don't necessarily have to do it with the flags out there. What the community and what the organizers failed to see was that we were not—yes, we were fighting for the righteous cause of the people—but we were fighting a PR battle and PR battles are not necessarily won with just your beliefs. If the other person is going to have a negative impression of what you are saying before you even start saying it, then you are basically shutting out a lot of people. And by shutting out a lot of people, we managed to keep a lot of people completely ignorant of what had happened.

Another Tamil woman I spoke to knew very little about the Sri Lankan civil war until she entered university and joined the campus Tamil Students' Association. Even as she attended the protests and was also consuming many of the frames projected at the demonstrations, she noted that she felt uneasy about many of the framing strategies employed. Numerous young respondents I spoke with were "introduced" to the civil war in Sri Lanka and the Tamil separatist struggle, often for the *first* time, at the protests. While it may seem surprising that individuals could become involved in movements without really knowing much about the movement itself, it is in fact quite commonplace. Learning in social movements can occur incidentally, informally, or intentionally, but it is always significant in that applied learning can have profound effects on an individual's worldview (Chovanec, Lange, and Ellis 2008, 198). As one Tamil woman pointed out,

> At first, I didn't really understand. But once I was in it I liked what I saw—I was proud of how many Tamil people came together at the time and how passionate they were. And every time there was another politician or something who came down, I was proud that we achieved that. Something that I didn't like, and that sort of still sticks with me, is how often they brought the flag out. I think it was just part of the protocol in the beginning but I think I realized that the flag particularly hindered us a lot; when people saw it they were afraid, or they didn't understand, or they just thought "terrorist." And I think that if our main goal at the time was to achieve help for the people that were on the ground, then that wasn't necessary.
>
> **Interviewer:** *Did you agree with all the chants?*
>
> Some of them, yeah, it's weird because I didn't really know much about the leader [Prabhakaran] at the time, like from the protest I started to learn more about him and I've read more about him since. So I didn't know if I necessarily felt that he was

my leader, so that was a little difficult for me to say. And also there were chants that said, "The Sri Lankan government is a terrorist government" and that sort of labeling didn't need to happen, I think. I really feel like if we were focused more on the humanitarian aspect of the cause and didn't—I think it's impossible for us to separate the political from the humanitarian aspect, but I think if we could have sacrificed some things we would have maybe gained more. If people would have maybe put down the flag towards the end, maybe it would have been better.

Interviewer: *Why were the flags out there?*

Well, I remember we had a debate, well not a debate, but a discussion about this; it was a bunch of TSAs [Tamil Students' Associations] and I think TYO and they were saying that "the flag is our symbol, and if we lose our symbol then what are we?" But I think we didn't need that to symbolize us, that we knew who we were and didn't necessarily need an image to do that. Particularly because other people label it a terrorist image.

Many other respondents disagreed that the LTTE flag was a strategic mistake and argued that as the flag represented Tamil identity, as well as the Tamil people's support for the LTTE, it was a fundamentally important element of the demonstrations.[1] As Marian Sawer (2007, 54) has made clear, the visual strategies of social movements "tell us much about how they are trying to connect with their supporters. They are creating symbolic languages that are about emotional identification as well as about organizational needs for distinctive brands and brand loyalty. . . . They may become part of the contestation over public memory" (see also Chesters and Welsh 2004; Parkin 1995). Many argue, in other words, that regardless of whether the presence of the flag aided in the closure of political opportunities, the Tamil community has an obligation to stand its ground and a responsibility to stand by its rebel force, which "stood by us" for the last several decades. As one Tamil man pointed out,

The flag is our identity, and when you come and protest, like for example if there was a genocide in Canada, obviously you're going to bring the Canadian flag. Just like that, the Tamil people brought their Tamil Eelam flag, because that's their identity. So if you say, "Put the Canadian flag down and come and negotiate with us," you won't do that. In the Tamil context, you're fighting a war because you want to preserve your identity and your homeland. So much people have sacrificed their lives, and then you're saying "put down the flag," which is your identity which you fought for . . . it's . . . and you know so many people have sacrificed for it, and you're saying, you know, put down your basic principles and come and talk to us. I think it's just too much to ask for any community, not just the Tamil community. So in that sense, I think it was appropriate to bring the flag. But the thing is, the Canadian government

> doesn't have the education that the flag is not the Tiger flag, but the flag of Tamil Eelam. At the same time, they don't even understand who the Tigers are. These guys are . . . like most of these guys who say that the Tigers are terrorists; [they] just read books, like any other person in Canada, and they're saying that, you know, they're terrorists. But did you ever walk in their shoes? Have you ever lived in the environments these soldiers have lived in? Have you ever seen your mother getting . . . or your sister getting raped in front of you? These are the questions, you know, you need to ask before talking about the flag identity or putting down anything. These are the things that politicians should consider.

In contrast to other respondents who noted that one of the things they did not like about the demonstrations was the presence of the flag, a Tamil woman, heavily involved with the protests, stated that she became irritated whenever people urged them to put down the flag. As she explained,

> I think when there started to be a division between organizations, you saw it happening. You saw one organization holding a protest on this intersection and then right down the street on the other side there'd be another protest and that's when I was just like, "We're here for one cause." We should be uniting for that one cause, not to show the international community that there's a separation even within Tamils. Another thing was when certain people were like, "Put down the flag" and in my head, I would be thinking, "This is our identity. This is our nation. This is our flag. We have no reason to put down this flag."

Similarly, another Tamil man argued that not having the flag present would have signaled that the Tamil community now agrees with the Canadian government's proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist organization. Rather, he argued, the job of the community is to fight to change the public perception of the movement.

> I was wearing a T-shirt with the LTTE flag on it, and some people told me to not wear it. I was like, "What are you talking about, man? What are you guys afraid of?" I'm standing right beside law enforcement. They didn't say anything to me, yet these idiots came and said don't wear it. Why are you doing that? If an MP doesn't want to come out because I'm wearing a flag, I don't need him to come out. Simple. Either they support us fully or they don't support us at all. If someone tells you to change your dad's last name, would you change it? I won't. That defines who I am, right? "Oooh, the flag is a little aggressive!" Well, I'm sorry. To me, the red on the flag signifies the blood we lost. The Tiger is an ancestral symbol. The gun signifies what we needed to pick up to defend ourselves. That's how I define it. If the Canadian government proves that the LTTE is a terrorist organization and bans it, that is their

> job. They've done their job. What's our job? To defend them and prove that it's not. That's where my job begins.

The issue of the LTTE flag, perhaps a little surprisingly, continues to be an important point of contention and debate in the Tamil diaspora. New organizations that have arisen in the diaspora following the defeat of the LTTE are also struggling with their relationship to the LTTE and, by extension, with the presence of the flag. As the flag represents the LTTE, and many believe the Tigers to be the sole protectors and representatives of the Tamil community, whether to shed the movement's ideologies and symbols following its defeat will be an ongoing debate within the Tamil diaspora.

Canada's Handling of the Demonstrations

In addition to having mixed feelings about the flag, many whom I spoke with also expressed varying opinions about how the Canadian public reacted to the month-long demonstrations. Views varied with respect to how the Canadian government, fellow Canadians who happened to walk by the protests, and the media framed and treated the Tamil demonstrations. As one Tamil woman pointed out, the response from the media often trivialized the suffering of Tamils in Sri Lanka that the demonstrations were trying to convey (Jasper 1997, 286). Similarly, she pointed out, many Canadians were once again confused that minority communities were protesting about a conflict happening thousands of kilometers away.

> I think a lot of the everyday talk about the protest was really undermining. By Canadians and by the media and stuff. For example, covering the protests on your morning traffic report is disrespectful. I think it's really undermining what's going on. Whatever it is, it's reality to people. Whether I agree or not, people feel like their family and their home is in danger. It's trivializing to be like, "and there's this Tamil protest so avoid the Gardiner." That's not constructive. I heard some politicians say, "They're Canadians and they're worried about their family" and I was like, "Great, now can you get everyone else to understand that too?" Because I don't think people understood that. This isn't us versus them. This isn't a Canadians versus Tamils. There are people who are Canadian and Tamil and you need to, how do I put it, see yourself as part of that continuum as well. Even if you're not Tamil but you're Canadian, this is someone else that's Canadian that's worried about something—why are they worried? Why do they care so much? I think there was a lot of, "I'm Canadian and these are just foreigners who haven't assimilated."

Another Tamil woman concurred:

> This isn't about me or about me being Tamil. It's far beyond that. It's a Canadian issue, right? And when I talk to people, they're like, "You're born here? No way!" . . . I think this whole protest made me understand my community better but at the same time helped me get a broader view of how the Canadian society views Tamil people. And I think by the end of it, they really did have a lot of respect for the Tamil community, in terms of the way they mobilized, in terms of how the protests were being done. Because a lot of newspapers near the end would write: they would come in thousands but they would leave in thousands and there was no mess, no damages, nothing, and it was so well organized. It's like they never realized why people were able to come out like that and how much it meant to them. We're not going to come out and hold such strong beliefs and values and morals and scream at the top of our lungs if this cause never meant something to us, or we were not given the facts behind all this, and I think it took a while for the Canadians to realize that. I think as they realized that, we gained more and more support, and I think that was important, just the educational process of it. Just to be said that being Tamil doesn't mean you're a terrorist, being Tamil can be far beyond just that.

Another respondent pointed out that it was not simply about the demonstrations, but rather that the Canadian government has repeatedly failed to speak up against the injustices faced by the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. He lamented that even as the international community knew what was occurring during the final months of the conflict, they did nothing. As he noted,

> They have failed the Tamil community miserably and they continue to fail the community even now. I don't think the Tamil community, 250,000 or 300,000 strong, has any sort of relevance for Canadian foreign-policy makers and they feel that they can just trample on us because we don't have the political muscle, the financial muscle, or the PR muscle to fight back and do it in a consistent, continuous way. . . . The UN knew what was happening. Most of the players in the international community knew what was happening, and they chose to be silent about it, so I don't think I have any respect for any Canadian foreign-policy makers, or government for that matter.
>
> **Interviewer:** *What were you expecting them to do?*
>
> At least speak up. At least speak up and speak out about it. Obviously, I understand that the Canadian government can't get involved militarily in the Sri Lankan conflict. That is fine. But if they would have been able to rally the international community, they could have led the call for cease-fire. Canada would have, the UK would have, and the U.S. alone would have been sufficient if they would have put their interest in India aside or India's interests in these countries aside and then stepped in, that

> would have been sufficient. It is not just the international community shutting their doors and their eyes to the Tamil community, they were asked to do that too. And they chose to ignore our plight because their political, business interests or security interests involving India was more important than thirty-five thousand people dying in Mullivaikkal. And we paid the price.

While many respondents were highly critical of the Canadian government, as well as the media, many others recognized the political opportunities available to them in the Canadian context. After pointing out that they somewhat assumed that the demonstrations would accomplish very little, they expressed gratitude that Canada provided the space for the Tamil community to come together and grieve publicly. When asked how Canada handled the protests, for example, one Tamil woman pointed out,

> I think we always seem to criticize them but they've done a lot for us. If they wanted, they could've stopped a lot of things and if they wanted, they could've put a lot of people behind bars. They could've just taken me and said, "You're being too radical," and thrown me inside the jail. So I think the Canadian government has helped us. They mobilized with us in a certain way. I mean it was hard but in all reality, governments are going to be fearful of such a large and powerful group anyway. We are powerful, we are large, and we could cause a lot of damage, so for the government to think that way, I don't think they should be blamed. And they're doing things now, whether it's on a slower pace. They are doing things so let's just give them some time before we start criticizing.

In addition to the presence of the LTTE flag at the demonstrations, there is one event that many in the Tamil community were equally ambivalent about: the blockade of the Gardiner Expressway, an important highway connecting downtown Toronto with several western suburbs, on the evening of May 10, 2009, which was also Mother's Day. Throughout the month of May 2009, the Sri Lankan government shelled many hospitals in the Mullivaikkal area. On May 11—still May 10 in Toronto—government forces shelled the whole of the Mullivaikkal area, causing the deaths of numerous civilians (ICG 2010b, 20). Even though, as many organizers told me, there was always talk among groups like TYO of a highway blockade, the decision to block the Gardiner, which has traffic volumes of fifty to one hundred thousand vehicles per day, was reached as news of this new round of shelling trickled into the Tamil community in Canada. As journalist David Topping (2009) wrote in *Torontoist* the day after the blockade, "Not long before dusk on Sunday night, several thousand Tamil protesters flowed onto the Gardiner Expressway, shutting it down shortly there-

after, to protest the ongoing violence in Sri Lanka. The Gardiner would remain shut down until about midnight, when the protest migrated off the roads and on to Queen's Park." For the majority of respondents, even those who were present on the Gardiner and relish the experience, the blockade perhaps did more damage than anticipated. As one Tamil man argued,

> You live as a citizen of this country, of this city, and you have to be mindful of the things that you do that affect other people. Shutting down the Gardiner, like I said, we joke about it being awesome, but I think it did damage to the perception of Tamil people within the context of Canada and maybe in the world. We got headlines around the world, great, you know, it brought it more into the mainstream and the forefront, which is great for the, I'll say, goals of the people who are organizing it, but I think it hurt us as well and it will live with us, it will stay with, like, my identity, it will be something that people remember.

A Tamil woman concurred and pointed out that it perhaps reversed much of the progress that had been made in the previous months.

> You had this humanitarian human chain event, right, you had all these, like, nondisruptive, peaceful events and then you had a group of people blocking the Gardiner Expressway. It totally turned the media and the general Canadian public against the cause. Yes, it got the politicians to listen, yes, sure, you got a few phone calls from Parliament Hill, but as far as who we were trying to talk to, you know, those people during the human chain events, it would be the random twenty-four-year-old that you stop, while they were heading to the subway, and you'd say, hey, here's a pamphlet, this is what the Tamils are going through. All of a sudden, that person can't get to Toronto and you blocked them, you just turn them all off, and so I think all that work that they had done to get the general average Joe to listen, it just vanished. All that work—it felt like it was in vain because those people were now frustrated, were writing, commenting, on the media, saying, "Oh my God, what is wrong with these people? You cost us millions of dollars and plus you wasted six hours of our time."

Much of the criticism from the mainstream media and even from within the Tamil community highlighted the fact that May 10 was Mother's Day, and preventing many Canadians from visiting their families was fundamentally misguided. However, as one Tamil man noted, the demonstrations were more meaningful particularly *because* it was Mother's Day. As he argued,

> The people who got stuck in the traffic jam, I do sympathize with them, but it's important for them to understand. The funny thing is it was good that it was on Moth-

TABLE 6. Tamil youths' ($N = 69$) beliefs about the Gardiner Expressway blockade (percentages)

Completely justified	31.9	Somewhat unjustified	20.3
Somewhat justified	37.7	Completely unjustified	10.1

> er's Day actually, because you know Mother's Day is all about love and caring about your mother, right? And the thing is half the people in Canada who were marching and ended up on the Gardiner Expressway, ended up there because they wanted to save their mothers and fathers from getting killed by the genocide in Sri Lanka. Not only that, but their children. So they should look at it on that context. I think we made Mother's Day more meaningful than it usually is [*laughs*].

Other respondents, while recognizing that the Gardiner blockade may have altered the public perception of the Tamil demonstrations, also lamented that it took such drastic actions to refocus the media's attention back on the protests. After many months of being on the streets, the demonstrations had become somewhat normalized and were no longer newsworthy, except as part of the morning traffic report. As one frustrated Tamil respondent noted,

> You try, you try, you try and you get to a point where you don't know what else to do. Do you know what I mean? You're doing all this, but nobody seems to care. You don't know what the hell else to do. A lot of people say going on the Gardiner Expressway was a big mistake. No it wasn't. Why? Because after we did that, people started to look at it again. You have a protest with ten thousand people downtown, no media, no one knows about what's going on, nobody wants to know. All of a sudden you do something stupid like the Gardiner, all of a sudden it's all over the news, it's everywhere and everybody . . . right after the Gardiner, so many people at my work asked, "You're Tamil, right? What's going on?"

As the Tamil protests illustrated, mobilizing structures and framing processes, as well as certain protest strategies, can affect the opening and closing of political opportunities. While a political context may allow various kinds of social movements to operate freely, the "structure" is also characterized by certain constraints. Particular mobilizing structures as well as frames chosen by activists can lead to the closing of opportunities, especially if these methods fall outside of the "discursive space" of the broader community or are increasingly seen through the lens of national security. However, another factor is equally important in influencing the success or failure of social movements.

Policing, Protest, and the Policing of Protest

To further complicate our discussion, a fourth factor, outlined by Doug McAdam (1996, 27) and James Jasper (2012, 7) in their conceptualizations of political contexts, comes into play: repression. Repression consists of two elements, one dependent on the other. First, the *capacity* for repression refers to the resources available to the state for repressing contentious behavior. Second, even though the state may have sufficient resources for this end, it must have the *propensity* for repression (see also Tilly 1978). Social movement scholars have debated whether state repression should be understood not as an independent element of the political opportunity structure but rather as an expression of its openness or lack thereof (della Porta and Reiter 1998; McAdam 1996, 28; della Porta 1995). Protest policing, a manifestation of repression, could therefore be viewed as a way to gauge how accessible political opportunities are to a social movement (della Porta 1996, 62).

While the mobilizing structures and framing processes of the Tamil demonstrations may have damaged elite alignments, even with the presence of the LTTE flags at the protests as well as the organizational role played by banned groups like the World Tamil Movement, the overall posture of and decisions made by law enforcement did indeed allow for a fairly receptive political context. The existence of an open political environment, supported by law enforcement, was crucial in creating the space necessary for a grieving Tamil community to come together, articulate their emotional uncertainties, and mourn communally. Not only that, but it encouraged the Tamil community to build confidence in itself as a mobilized force and to begin articulating the nature of a post-LTTE transition. Such a need, I will show, was recognized early on by Canadian law enforcement and precluded a more aggressive response at every stage of the demonstrations.

The relationship between protesters and police is relatively understudied, yet this interaction says much about the relative constraint or openness of the political context (della Porta and Tarrow 2012; Hoggett and Stott 2010; Earl and Soule 2006; Earl, Soule, and McCarthy 2003; Wisler and Giugni 1999). While establishing protest as a fundamental right legitimizes the actions of protesters, deeming a protest a form of disorderly conduct can do just the opposite and therein determine the style of police response that follows (della Porta 1996). According to Toronto police chief Bill Blair, as well as other law enforcement officials in Toronto and Ottawa, efforts were taken to balance the right of the Tamil community to demonstrate on the streets of Canada with the rights of the

broader Canadian public. When I asked him about his role during the demonstrations, Chief Blair explained,

> These are statutory requirements of the police. But, at the time, we take our responsibility to protecting people's rights equally serious. I do. As the chief of police, my responsibility is to put the right people in place to establish procedures and a standing operating response to the type of demonstrations that we faced last year. So that's my responsibility, and then also to explain. One of my jobs is to explain to the people of Toronto what we're doing and why, so that there might be a better understanding of how the law should be applied and what the priorities are.

One of the earliest challenges, though, was pinpointing the leadership among the demonstrators, building trust with the community, and ironing out some of the unacceptable aspects of the demonstrations. "At first, it wasn't that easy but I guess it was one of those things where, you know, trust, you've got to build trust and that took a couple of days to do that," explained a law enforcement official in Ottawa. One roadblock to this process that he described was the fact that early on in the demonstrations leaders had not yet emerged within the movement. Law enforcement wasn't sure whom to approach when there were issues they needed to address. "We had no point of contact," the officer continued.

> I was able to work into the community through my contacts and once I was introduced to some people that were playing a leadership role and once I started to keep in contact with them, things improved. Basically, my concern was that during the first and the second day, they were breaking the law. They had taken over the entire street, Wellington Street, which is one of the main arteries in Ottawa—it's right in front of Parliament Hill and the whole street had to be shut down and that basically is a main artery for commuters traveling through from Quebec to Ontario to work and so on. So when that was shut down, you can imagine the public outcry. That was a big concern, and also they were using propane tanks and stuff to cook food close to Parliament Hill and that's another safety concern, for explosion and all that. So these were some of the concerns which were addressed.

While some of the early demonstrations raised safety concerns and broke some bylaws, the use of force, especially for minor infractions such as illegally blocking certain roadways, was never considered. Chief Blair remarked,

> I saw it as our responsibility to our citizens the necessity of giving them the right to, provided they weren't providing illegal support to the LTTE, go out there and demonstrating their concern for family and friends that were in great danger. When

> they took to the streets, first of all it was done initially very peacefully, remarkably so. Well organized on the sidewalk, waving flags—albeit the flags that are generally recognized as the flags of the LTTE. But, it was also the flag of those people. But they were very peaceful, very lawful, but it escalated unfortunately, but never to the point of violence, and never to the point of destruction of property. They sat down on a roadway [University Avenue]. And I was of the belief, as were my operational commanders, that even though a bylaw was being broken by blocking the roadway, it did not constitute a sufficient jeopardy to public safety to warrant more extreme action by going and forcing those people out. . . . It was loud, it was noisy, it was inconvenient, but it did not, in my opinion, approach anything even resembling a breach of the peace or a risk to public safety. And so we managed it the best we could.

Despite their assessment of the nature of the protests, both Chief Blair and the official in Ottawa received numerous complaints from community members in Toronto and Ottawa with respect to the demonstrations. Commenting on the nature of the complaints he received, the officer in Ottawa noted,

> They felt that the protesters were being disrespectful to Canada because the LTTE is considered to be a terrorist organization according to the government of Canada and with people flying that flag, flying the colors, you know, the community was a little frustrated and questioning the police—why we're allowing that to happen. But that was it. And also the fact that the traffic slowed down, that it was frustrating for people. The business owners around that area where the Parliament was were extremely frustrated because the protesters were using the parking lots and their toilets and flooding their business. It was affecting their business. They were pitching tents in the underground parking lots and sleeping there, drinking, urinating and all that stuff, so there was a great deal of frustration. But again our team dealt with it and we briefly acted as a boundary spanner and communicated with all parties and kept them all informed. Every time a problem arose, we'd kind of rectify it right there and then.

Law enforcement had to continually mediate between the Tamil community and its rights to peaceful assembly and the broader public. Once certain community members had taken leadership or liaison roles of their own and began providing information and updates to the police, law enforcement was able to more effectively communicate and allay the frustrations of community members in Toronto and Ottawa.

But underlying some of the complaints law enforcement received, according to Chief Blair, was commentary on the nature and limits of Canadian multiculturalism and pluralism. In many ways he had assumed that Canadian multicul-

turalism was more mature than it revealed itself to be during the demonstrations:

> I think it demonstrated for me as a Canadian citizen, not as a police chief, that we have not yet evolved in our pluralism as a Canadian society so that there would be not only appreciation of our diversity, but an appreciation of all of the nuance of our diversity, which includes our history and our political views and sociological views. . . . My observation during those protests was that not everyone in Toronto understood what was going on. Not everyone in Toronto saw this as a right of Canadian citizens. I was receiving a lot of negative e-mails, correspondence, and phone calls from other citizens who simply didn't understand why we weren't driving these people from the street. And when I tried to explain, "But they're just expressing themselves," and they're saying, "But, you know, they're breaking a law." I said, But it's a very little law. It's a very minor law. And for me to drive them off the streets, I would have to use force. I have no legal authority to do that. And I'm not going to break the law to counter someone else breaking the law, especially when my offence would be greater than theirs. But I had some people saying some really outrageous things. And I saw an element of xenophobia; I saw an element even of racism in what I was hearing. . . .
>
> Now, the fight between the LTTE and the Sinhalese—that perhaps should be left in another place. But the concern that the Tamil people had here for their family, friends, and relatives, their concern is here. The fear of what is happening to their family and friends is here, and you can't displace that. You can't say, well, you know, if you're worried about that just go there and be worried about it. You can be worried about it right here, because we care about our families and our fellow citizens and people in our communities. We care about them. We *should* care about them. And that's quite understandable, and we should advocate for them. It was challenging, because, you know, sometimes the Tamil people were yelling at us, because we were the only other ones that were listening. But that's okay. That's kind of our job too. Because we represent society, you know, civil society. We're the authority.

The framework of the basic rights that the Tamil community had during the protest, as expressed by Chief Blair, extended to law enforcement's perception of the LTTE flag's presence as well. It's clear that the presence of the LTTE flag hindered the elite alignments that were once available to the Tamil community during the demonstrations. Law enforcement's stance, unlike that of some of the politicians who had distanced themselves from the demonstrations, was shaped less by what was insinuated by protest acts and more by what those acts actually meant for public safety. While they advised the community that the presence of the flag might be counterproductive to the goals of the demon-

strations, Chief Blair explained, they made it clear that it was largely not their concern. As Chief Blair pointed out,

> They were seeking the intervention, Canadian intervention. And the flags were actually a hindrance to that as opposed to a benefit. And we wanted them to understand that. But they have a right in Canada, and this is a right which I'm responsible also to protect. People have a right to express themselves. All Canadian citizens, including Tamil Canadians, have a right to lawfully and peacefully express their opinion. The flags for me were not problematic. A flag is not a crime. . . . We've been to demonstrations where Hezbollah flags are waved. Hezbollah is also listed as a terrorist organization. I know my job here, and I'm not an advocate. And while I thought it was counterproductive from *their* standpoint, my concern was to what extent it would be seen as provocative and, therefore, tending to incite violence or a breach of the peace. In my opinion it tended to alienate the broader population. But, again, that's not my role in society. My role is to maintain the peace.

How the demonstrators perceived this stated role, however, differed. Tamil youth active in the demonstrations had mixed responses when it came to their interactions and confrontations with law enforcement. Most believed that law enforcement, in both Ottawa and Toronto, handled the protests very well and showed the protestors much respect. Others, however, did have some aggressive run-ins with the police and largely blamed law enforcement for disrespecting the Tamil community's right to address its concerns. One Tamil woman who recalled the blockade of University Avenue described the nature of the police officials' aggression:

> I remember we had a street blocked down and they wanted to go a bit further or something. Some guys, they wanted to go a bit further down the street and take [control of] more of the street and then create a situation with the police. So, I don't know, they called my aunt and then we went running to that side of University Avenue and then some of the police were arguing with some of the younger guys. Then I guess it got kind of physical and they threw one of the guys onto the street, one of the Tamil guys. The police threw this guy into the street and then the Tamil guys got angry behind us. Then me and my aunt went to the police and we were like, "We want to talk to your chief. We want to talk about it instead of arguing. Let's solve this problem that we have here." He's like, "Okay, he's right across the street." So right when me and my aunt were going to walk towards the chief, before we even took two steps, they were like, "Charge! Charge!" and they had horses. They had a line of horses, a line of police, and then there was us, and right when I turned around I was picked up by a police officer and I was thrown onto the floor. Thrown! Then my aunt was picked up

> and thrown. As soon as we got back up, picked up and thrown again. If they had told me, "Get up and move," of course I would have moved. They don't need to pick me up and throw me onto the floor.

The interaction between demonstrators and Toronto police during the Gardiner Expressway blockade on May 10, 2009, led to some violent clashes as well. One Tamil man, for example, was severely injured by a police baton strike to his head following the commotion on the Gardiner. As he recalled later,

> So during the Gardiner, they were pushing into us and we were just trying to maintain ground. They were pushing and then I saw somebody get grabbed and pulled down and dragged to the police area, and I felt something on my head. Everything was happening so fast, like the high emotions, and I think my thought process was like, "Okay, I just felt something on my head. What was it?" I didn't feel pain at the time. I guess the adrenalin was in me and I am like, "Okay, something just hit me, what was it? Could it be the police who hit me?" I am like, "No, no, it can't be, it can't be. Why would they? I didn't do anything." They are doing the offensive, we are just here. We are just singing chants, we are lighting candles, and we are holding hands. We are here for a cause peacefully. When I felt that, I thought maybe somebody's elbow hit me by accident, and then after that one second or two seconds of confusion, I could feel the blood dripping down the back of my head, covering my eye, and dripping down my face. Somebody grabbed my head and started screaming, "Oh, he is bleeding." That is when I realized that it was the police who hit me. I guess I didn't feel any pain at the time, so I wanted to stay at the protest. Soon I started getting dizzy. The blood was pouring. The police wanted to get an ambulance for me. So they called me and they told me to come over to their side to one of the ambulances. I told them I didn't want to come over to that side, because I didn't feel safe with the police. If I really, really had to guess why they wanted me on their side, it is just to get me away from all the cameras. Get me away from all the videos. So I made sure that anybody holding a camera got enough pictures. I made sure that everyone holding a video recorder recorded me enough. I felt really dizzy. I really thought I was going to drop. I wanted to stay. I felt really guilty for leaving. We went into the ambulance, went to the hospital. Seven hours later, I got six staples in my head.

According to Chief Blair, the Gardiner presented several new challenges that they had not faced over the previous several months on the streets of downtown Toronto. For one, the Gardiner Expressway, which connects downtown Toronto with the city's western suburbs, is an elevated roadway. The organizers, he said, did not fully understand the precariousness of the situation—if the police tried to force the protestors off the bridge and people panicked, they

risked people falling from the railings or they could have caused a stampede down the expressway's ramp. "I think there was a realization within the crowd itself that they were in the wrong place," Blair told me. "They were definitely in a bad place. And they were looking at a way to get off of that bridge and save face—to come off of that bridge with dignity. And I was quite prepared to give them the opportunity to come off of the bridge with dignity. . . . There was criticism of the police for not forcing them off. But quite frankly not killing people is something . . . I don't mind being criticized for that."

Even though the idea of the Gardiner Expressway protest may have been discussed in the community for some time, as many of my respondents stated, the majority of individuals had little sense of the organizers' plans and found themselves "dragged along with the crowd." What erupted on the expressway posed a challenge to law enforcement for this very reason: to respond to a demonstration that was in part spontaneous, the police had to identify who among the organizers could help resolve what had become, according to Chief Blair, a public safety issue. As Blair explained,

> One of the main challenges in managing the Tamil protests that we found is that there was not one leader, or one set of leaders, that you could negotiate with. There were many leadership groups and individuals within the demonstrations. So we would go to one demonstration and speak to people who purported to be the leadership. And we'd start to move off, and then a big chunk would go in another direction, because that was their leadership heading off that way. It was complex. Even trying to talk to people on the bridge, we were talking to people there who were saying, "Well, I'm not the one who can get them off. They won't follow me. I didn't lead us up here. They won't come off for me." So it was a matter of finding someone who could say, "Okay, that's it. It's over, let's go." And once that connection got made, that was it.

Even after the many confrontations between members of the Tamil community and law enforcement, the majority opinion on both sides with respect to the demonstrations seems to be positive. For the most part, there was mutual respect and a recognition that the community had a right to publicly address its concerns and raise awareness about the plight of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Similarly, law enforcement officials did their best to accommodate and protect these rights, while also ensuring that the community stayed within the boundaries of the law and their civic responsibility. Law enforcement officials seem to have adopted an opportunistic model of protest policing, which leads authorities to handle even illegal protests in a soft manner as they take a "wait and see" approach to future developments (della Porta and Fillieule 2004, 221). Even following his many complaints about the behavior of some of the Tamil protesters,

the Ottawa liaison made it clear that these incidents did not reflect the overall tenor of the demonstrations. As he stated,

> We deal with a lot of protesters because it's Canada's capital, and the uniqueness of the Tamil protest was that they were pretty much role-model protesters. I mean, if there was a protest, we would like to see the protest being carried out the way it was by the Tamil community, you know? They were very polite, very clean, they cleaned up all the mess after they were done at Parliament Hill. They weren't confrontational at any point. There was not one arrest made during the entire course of the protest. They weren't aggressive whatsoever. . . . They were, I would say, role-model protesters. . . . But you will find, I mean, a couple of confrontations here and there, isolated incidents away from the protest site, on the side streets where youth are drinking or challenging police. But I'm telling you those are very, very minor compared to the big picture.

For a campaign that lasted from December 2008 to late May 2009, the relationship between law enforcement and demonstrators was remarkably harmonious and, indeed, grew more mature and sophisticated as the months passed. Law enforcement officials I spoke with were clear that in the initial stages, they were utterly surprised by the demonstrations and frustrated by the inability to identify and develop a working relationship with the leadership. This initial confusion subsided fairly quickly, Chief Blair noted, as members of the diaspora stepped forward as liaisons between the demonstrators and the police. Much of the work put in behind the scenes, particularly by organizations like the Canadian Tamil Congress, to ensure that the demonstrations remained largely peaceful, allowed for the protest space in which the Tamil community came together, formed relationships, and mourned collectively for their ethnic kin in Sri Lanka. In other words, what allowed the demonstrations to be such a transformative event for the Tamil diaspora was not simply the mere occurrence of the protests, but rather the *work* put in by members of the community as well as law enforcement to ensure that stability was achieved and sustained.

"I Didn't Want to Leave": Understanding the Significance of the 2009 Protests

While many participants saw the five-month-long protest as transformative, some in the Tamil community dismissed it as largely insignificant because it failed to bring about a cease-fire and has not been reproduced in size or scale since 2009. From a sociological perspective, one based on decades of compara-

tive study of protest movements, this argument fails to see the long-term consequences of the protest and the importance of the emotional, social, and intellectual bonds forged on the streets of Toronto and on campuses across Canada. The protests were not a part-time event for many Tamil youth in Canada. Many youth stayed overnight on the streets of downtown Toronto and Ottawa, holding vigils while the city slept. New friendships were formed, new ideological commitments and political opinions were forged, and new couples were formed as individuals met for the first time at the protests and began dating. Close relationships developed amid the anger and desperation of the final months of the war. The strong bonds that were formed at the demonstrations occurred not only between youths but between youths and people of an older generation as well.

Along with the demonstrations in Toronto and Ottawa, more local initiatives to raise awareness about what was occurring in the final months of the war engaged Tamil youth across Canada. Several university student associations held "famines," letter-writing campaigns, and cultural events on campuses. During one such "famine," more than fifty students gathered at the student center and observed a twenty-four-hour fast. As several of the respondents pointed out, it was a memorable experience, as a large number of Tamils gathered in one place, stayed overnight at their school, erected banners, made speeches, and bonded over discussions about the situation in Sri Lanka. The demonstrations and the initiatives that arose alongside them had a significant impact on Tamil youth, as well as on diaspora identity overall.

The demonstrations were, in a sense, a *moment of transference*, after which the diaspora took on increased responsibility for guarding the rights of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka and holding the Sri Lankan government to account. Not only that, but they planted intellectual, emotional, and collective seeds in the diasporic consciousness. The final months of the Sri Lankan civil war served as a significant "moral shock" that will in many ways color the future of the diaspora's nationalist or separatist articulations (Nepstad and Smith 2001; Jasper 1997, 106; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). Social movement scholars have begun paying increasing attention to what are called "singular" or "transformative" events for their importance in redefining individual and movement identity (della Porta 2012; Jasper 1997, 90–92). As Jasper (1997, 91) points out, "Culture and biography help us understand why single events can have a big effect on protest by arousing strong emotions, encapsulating hopes and desires, constructing interests, even defining new collective actors on the political stage." The very identity of the Tamil diaspora, as a new collective actor, was largely redefined by the catastrophic events of the final months of the conflict, which

will continue to serve as a kind of "founding event" for many Tamil youth who mobilized at the time (Jasper 1997, 91).

The emotional significance that involvement in demonstrations can have for individuals, as well as the moral principles those individuals hold, can serve as a driving force for collective action (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2000, 2001, 2004; Aminzade and McAdam 2001; Jasper 1997, 1998). Because individuals each have unique biographies, constituted by the varying lessons imbibed from their parents, friends, and educational backgrounds, they will in turn hold varying moral principles, find varying feelings especially salient, and be mobilized by differing injustices. Even as individuals carry on with their day-to-day activities, their lives can be punctured by certain "fateful moments," decisive points in time when the choices that an individual makes have a potentially significant influence on his or her own future, or when an individual learns of something that has disastrous implications (Giddens 1991, 112–113). The 2009 demonstrations were, for many Tamil youth, a fateful moment—they served as sites of learning in which youth were introduced, albeit selectively and emotionally, to the history, politics, and suffering of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.

Such a focus on emotion, identity, and transformative events calls into question the importance of political contexts and mobilizing structures in determining successful mobilization. While the receptive political context in Canada allowed the demonstrations to occur, and while Tamil diaspora organizations and other mobilizing structures provided the necessary material resources (getting the permit and booking a venue, spreading the message through the media, ordering and printing flags and placards, etc.), many of the Tamil youth who spent months at the protests had little sense of the diaspora groups that were organizing the demonstrations—groups that, quite literally, paid to print the placards that the youth were holding. Many attended the protests for a variety of reasons unrelated to the forces that were pivotal in organizing the demonstrations (della Porta and Diani 2006, 89–113).

The Tamil protests challenged another assumption in social movement scholarship—that movement participants *bring into the movement* a certain set of beliefs and ideas, which the movement allows them to express collectively. Individuals, to be sure, also learn once they are part of a movement, but scholarship on the role of beliefs in social movements typically assumes that individuals have certain ideas about various social issues and are mobilized once they *find* a movement that reflects their positions (Munson 2008, 5). While this was indeed true for many of my respondents, the opposite was also highly prevalent. Tamil youth attended the demonstrations *before* they learned about the "frames" put forward during the protest campaign (see also Bromley and

Shupe 1986). Ziad Munson (2008, 5), in his study of pro-life activists in the United States, similarly argues that "many individuals get involved in the movement before they develop meaningful pro-life beliefs. Action in the movement actually precedes commitment to pro-life ideas or the development of pro-life 'frames'" (similar dynamics have been reported in Blee 2001; Polletta 2002; and Pierce and Converse 1990).

According to Munson (2008, 48), "contact" through various potential social networks is the first step toward full movement participation. Such contact could occur at school, a religious institution, or a workplace, as well as via the Internet. While it may seem that a movement based on ethnicity would not require the benefit of social networks, as individuals are already "connected" through a shared ethnic identity, this is simply not the case. Numerous members of the Tamil community did not attend the demonstrations, are not involved with any diaspora organization (including campus groups), and do not stay abreast of politics in Sri Lanka. Social networks still matter. As one Tamil woman pointed out, for example, her involvement with the Tamil Students' Association at her university was key in getting her to attend the demonstrations. She initially attended not out of a commitment to the issues facing the Tamil community in Sri Lanka but out of an obligation to her friends in the TSA. This initial "contact" stage may lead to the second step of "initial activism," the first engagement in social movement activity. In a particularly self-reflective moment during our interview, the Tamil woman I spoke to noted that the friendships she had with other Tamil youth at her school were important in her decision to participate in the demonstrations.

> Actually my very first protest was when our whole TSA went on a trip to Ottawa. And that was just crazy because I'd seen the protests in downtown Toronto but I felt like I didn't know what to do with it. Because it was in the beginning of my first year and I didn't know much about the political situation yet, so it was just sort of a shock to me to see it and I didn't know how to respond, I guess. I didn't know if I should participate or if I shouldn't. Then soon after I became [deleted for anonymity] of my TSA was the day of the Ottawa protest. I just went with everybody else and it was just, after that I attended a couple more in Toronto, but not the last few ones. I don't know why it was that particular one in Ottawa that I wanted to attend. I remember when I asked if I could go, my parents said no, and then I sort of got really upset about it because I really wanted to go. I don't know why at that point I decided, because there had been protests before in Toronto that I just hadn't attended. I guess because I hadn't, within myself, figured out how I felt about it yet. [After I joined the TSA] was sort of the point when I felt more connected to the Tamil people on campus—I

> hadn't really had many in the beginning. I guess at that point I did have a lot of Tamil friendships, Tamil friends. And I knew more about the situation [in Sri Lanka] and I felt that now was really important for me to witness it and to be a part of it. Which sounds bad, now that I think about it, that I didn't feel I wanted to, but it's not that I didn't want to before, but it's just that I didn't know enough to feel like I could honestly participate in the protests before.

Among those who attended the demonstrations, their experiences varied widely. However, two things emerged that many involved in the protests were consistently unhappy with. First, many felt that some Tamil youth were there simply to "hang out." As one Tamil woman pointed out,

> There were so many instances when I saw, I would see girls walking by all dressed up, with makeup on and wearing the high heels, and were just there to check out guys, and vice versa. That made me wonder: do they even understand what's happening, why are they here? But at the same time it was like, they're here, at least they've taken that step. And maybe being around these people, maybe they'll talk to someone who'll convince them or give them information. So at the very least, I couldn't be upset about that, I guess, but yeah, there was that question of why are some of these people here, they don't understand at all what's happening.

Second, many respondents were amazed at the amount of food available throughout the protests. While the food was at times purchased by the organizers, it was, for the most part, generously donated by the hundreds of Tamil restaurants that function in the Greater Toronto Area. Food became a point of critique for many at the demonstration, including one Tamil man who said,

> My mom fasted and stayed overnight. She stayed three days in Ottawa.
>
> **Interviewer:** *She stayed three days straight outside?*
>
> Outside. My mom is really into . . . me and my friends went but we stayed at the hotel. We didn't stay on the streets or anything like that. It was pretty bad. We got a hotel and my mom went and showered and everything but she would go back and wouldn't sleep. She really wanted to get that message across to the politicians here in Canada—if everybody were to just keep on loafing and sleeping then the message wouldn't be as strong, so she wanted to be an example and she got a lot of people to buy in to her message and they stayed with her. Didn't sleep and didn't eat. . . . I wasn't too into eating. I was more into getting my voice out there. But it was disappointing to see other people . . . just coming there and they looked like they only came for the food. It's disgusting. Of course, you have to make sure that you eat at the right time, but it was annoying to see some people just . . . I would see so many people in one place getting food and I would walk across . . . and you'd see the same

> group of people lining up to get some more food at the other place. You'd think, "You just ate!" [*laughs*]. I think a lot of people were just there for the sake of it, and they didn't want to be accused of not being there for the Tamil community in an extreme time of need. But they didn't have the passion; they weren't there for the real support. They were just there because they had to be there.

Despite the critiques, the vast majority of the participants I spoke with were deeply affected by the demonstrations and were proud that they were able to come together in such large numbers and support one another. For many youth, the demonstrations became a major part of their day-to-day activities, and some even went so far as to quit their job or drop out of school for the semester. Many did not want to leave the protests and felt incredibly guilty when they eventually went home to shower or sleep. As one Tamil man noted,

> We would stay overnight. Ottawa. Toronto. To be honest, I didn't want to leave. This was something I really believed in. I was there because I am trying to save lives. I am thinking I have a legitimate chance and I can only act on behalf of myself so I am thinking . . . me going home and sleeping comfortably in my bed versus me staying here and maybe screaming at the top of my lungs or holding a picket sign, that can be the difference between life and death of Tamils in Sri Lanka. That is why I didn't want to go home. I felt really guilty.

One Tamil woman withdrew from her university for an entire year because she felt that it was more important for her to be there for the Tamil community in Sri Lanka during this difficult period. These decisions by many members of the Tamil community in Canada, young and old, to leave school or quit their job complicates what social movement scholars have commonly understood to be one of the reasons why individuals become involved in movements—"biographical availability," which Doug McAdam (1986, 70) defines as "absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage and family responsibilities" (see also Corrigall-Brown 2012; Beyerlein and Hipp 2006). For most of the protest participants I spoke with, biographical availability determined whether their involvement was full-time or part-time. Those with full-time jobs and families attended when they could, while many Tamil youth who were enrolled in university attended more often. For a relatively small minority of my research sample, the notion of biographical availability failed to be relevant, as they knowingly freed themselves from any constraints. For these individuals, biographical availability was less about a set of factors in their lives that determined their participation and more an element of choice (Jasper 1997, 198).

For one Tamil woman I spoke with, this was especially true, as she withdrew from her studies at York University once the protests began. Since she was unable to contribute financially or personally be of help to Tamil children in Sri Lanka, she argued that committing herself to the demonstrations was the least she could do. However, she acknowledged one structural factor that increased her availability—the fact that contract professors, teaching assistants, and graduate assistants at York were on strike from November 6, 2008, to January 29, 2009, which was precisely the time during which the initial demonstrations took place. As she pointed out,

> I took a semester off from school. No, pretty much the whole year. York went on strike too, right? So, I mean that and on top of that, I think that it had a far greater meaning for me to be able to help my people. This is the least I can do and the struggle has been going on for so many years. I can't provide economically to my people, like I can't adopt a child or I can't feed five families, but the least I can do is voice for my people and make sure that around the world, no one comes back and says, "We never knew something like this happened to the Tamils, no one ever told us." And today, because we've done all this, to the international community we can always say, "Listen, we gave you so many opportunities to help our people and you did nothing. Shame on you." Instead of shame on us. And I think that was important to me. . . . And it wasn't only me . . . it was a lot of people who took time off, a lot of people who quit work. I mean, these are family breadwinners who are not going to work on a daily basis. And I think that's something to praise—for an entire community to be able to do that was a huge thing.

The experience of being at the demonstrations overnight and the conversations Tamil youth had with fellow demonstrators were also emotionally significant for those involved. Staying on the streets of Toronto or Ottawa throughout the night was not only about raising awareness but also about wanting to spend time with each other, to have meaningful conversations, and to continue to bear witness to what was happening in Sri Lanka. As there was no break in the fighting in Sri Lanka, there would be no break for those on the streets of Toronto, thousands of miles from the conflict zone. As one Tamil woman observed,

> Most things that were happening were youth run. All the protests and stuff like that. Staying overnight, in Ottawa for example, all these guys that you'd assume wouldn't . . . a lot of parents thought like they didn't care, they just drink, they're thugs or gangsters, and they just do this or that. *Those* were the dedicated people who were there overnight, with drums and stuff like that. Those were the people who were there through it all and it was students who stayed overnight most of the time.

> **Interviewer:** *So what did you do there at night?*
>
> We went to Tim Horton's quite a lot, to get stuff and come back. Sometimes we had things to do, like getting petitions signed. Before late night, like eleven o'clock, the media comes by. Other times, it was really, really cold and you sat and you chanted, that's what we did at night.

These and other accounts from the demonstrations are evidence of the need to understand the protest experience in broader terms. To dismiss the demonstrations as insignificant, as some in the community have, because they failed to bring about a cease-fire or an end to the conflict is shortsighted. In many ways, the true importance of the demonstrations lies in *what they did* for those involved. The protest campaign was significant in strengthening the resilience of the Tamil community in Canada. Resilience is a metaphor taken from a concept used in physics and mathematics to describe a material that can recover its shape after being deformed or compressed. Metaphorically, it extends to the notion of an individual's or a community's ability to recover from or adjust to difficult circumstances or drastic change (Norris et al. 2008, 127; see also Bonanno 2004; Brown and Kulig 1996/1997).

The notion of community resilience has been used to understand how communities survive and thrive following disasters ranging from tsunamis, earthquakes, and industrial accidents to terrorist attacks and episodes of mass violence. While the literature on resilience is vast and contains definitional disparities, there is general consensus that, first, resilience is best thought of as a *process* rather than an outcome and, second, that resilience is better conceptualized as *adaptability* as opposed to stability (Norris et al. 2008, 130). Resilience, then, is the process by which communities "return to functioning" normally following a disaster. It does not assume, however, that communities return to functioning the same way they did before the disaster. Rather, postevent functioning operates in the context of a "new normal" (Norris et al. 2008, 132; Redlener and Morse 2006).

One of the more significant characteristics that contribute to community resilience is community bonds and commitments—a sense of community and investment in the issues of that community, an attachment to place, and citizen participation, characterized by involvement in organizations and collective action (Norris et al. 2008, 139; Ahmed et al. 2004). Most of those I interviewed recognized that the demonstrations, while indeed aimed at raising awareness and getting the international community to act, also had an enormously important side-effect in helping the community, largely helpless from thousands of

miles away, to cope with the onslaught of the final months of the conflict. Many people living in Toronto had lost a lot of family and friends in the final months, and it was useful for them to come together with their fellow Tamils, cry, and talk to each other. One Tamil woman who attended the protests remarked that while she regrets that professional counselors were not present at the demonstrations to provide support for individuals, the protest space itself allowed for a kind of public mourning to take place:

> What I really liked about the protests was the way that they mobilized and the way the people came out, and they would stand from morning till night and, like I said, it was like one big family. Everyone was so caring and the people were just very emotional. What I didn't like was the fact that I guess people were sometimes a little too emotional and too radical and I think also, I think we didn't cater to the people who were really hurt in the right way. There weren't enough people to assist them, like outreach workers for those who were traumatized, people who have been through a lot, weren't given that. . . . Grievance, proper grievance strategies weren't put into play. Because there were a lot of people who would lose a lot of close family members and come out the next day. They were really, really upset and angry. They were just crying and crying and crying, but sometimes it's a good way to grieve.

Another Tamil woman considered the protests a life-changing event, as she lost a lot of her old friends and made new ones at the demonstrations. Her parents had discouraged her from attending the protests, but she had found "protest parents" who looked after her, provided support, and helped her interpret the emotions she was experiencing. Many had spent so much time at the demonstrations that they felt disoriented or "lost" when not there.

> I went not just because I wanted to show my support, but it made me feel, when you're away from that, you feel so lost and you feel you're not doing anything and you can get your anger out and stuff when you're there. It's something else, you just feel like you're surrounded by people who understand what you feel inside. . . . I lost a lot of friends. There's so many of my friends now still, we're still friends, but it's more of a "hi and bye" thing. These are people I used to hang out with every day but now, it's just like . . . they just weren't interested as much. There are people, we refer to each other as "protest friends" because we met at protests. There's a group of us that just met through that. And then there are people that I call my "protest mom," "protest dad," because there are a lot of these parents who came regularly too and even when I see them now, it feels really good inside.

The protests, she said, caused her to become agnostic, leading her to rethink the meaning of life and what she wanted to accomplish in her life. She attended school during the protests but felt disconnected from what was being taught and was consumed by the conflict in Sri Lanka. She eventually dropped out of school and returned only a year later.

> I am more spiritual now. I believe in a higher power but I'm not religious anymore. It was actually during protest times that I made this decision, that so many people living back home focus their whole life on God or they have so much hope. And even at the protests, we always had this hope but now I see the word "hope" as empty. . . . It's just like a word that we use to motivate ourselves. But really, at protests, what got us through was the people that we surrounded ourselves with. To spend day and night there was like, if I didn't have the support system that I had, there were my friends and stuff there, it wouldn't have been a lot harder. So now I see it as, if someone does something good for me, I should be thankful to them, not to some being that I can't see. And if I did something wrong to somebody, I should be sorry to them. . . . I stopped going to school and I stopped working to protest because I felt it was more important, because at the time, I actually thought getting on the streets was going to save people's lives because that's what they told me in high school, the justice system and all that. So I was, like, you just do these things the right way and good things will happen. So now, whether it's going to school or whatever I do, I tell myself it's to make myself a stronger person, to do more than I'm able to do now for back home. Not just back home but say we have Tamil Eelam, then I'd be, "Great," but then I'd probably hop over onto some next cause somewhere else because once you know that things like this happen, it's really hard to go back to your normal life.

For many of my respondents, the protests revealed much about their own personalities as well. In a particularly thoughtful moment during our conversation, one Tamil woman recalled that she did not realize she could become so emotionally drawn to a country and event she knew very little about. Indeed, following the demonstrations, she would become more interested in politics, read more about the conflict in Sri Lanka, and even develop a stronger relationship with her father based on conversations they were having about politics. As she pointed out,

> Since that period in general, and the protest definitely were a big part of it . . . because I didn't know I could be so passionate about it, having known nothing about it before that point. So that really showed me something about myself, I guess. And then afterwards I've tried to move forward. . . . I have had to educate myself more about the situation. I feel more a part of a community than as a bunch of dispersed Tamil

> people. I feel like there is potential for people, for us, like we've demonstrated the potential to come together as a community and that is we could mobilize that force towards, I don't know, a better cause . . . a better way, that we can really do something. I particularity feel with the youth that we are really capable, we are intelligent, we have these skills and these tools and they just need to be reharnessed somehow. I guess just like in myself, I guess I've changed the sorts of things that I care about, the articles that I'll read now, the things that I—and my relationship with my father has changed as well, because when we were younger he didn't really want to involve us in politics and for us to get worked up about that kind of thing . . . but as I started to get more interested in the cause, and I started to actually ask him questions about what was going on and what his experiences were and what he was doing right now to help, then our relationship got a lot better from that point.

The conversation revealed much about the emotional lives of protesters and also showed that the demonstrations of 2009 will have a lasting influence on the lives of many Tamil youth. Protests, then, can be enormously important "fateful moments" in individual's lives, during which they learn new ideas, reflect on their own moral compass, become involved in and stand up for new social issues, and form new and long-lasting social networks (Jasper 1997, 367). Indeed, a protest event can give rise to a social movement itself, or at least a rearticulation of how things were done in the past. Understanding such a dynamic is important for getting a clear picture of how the Tamil diaspora now conceives of itself in the postwar environment.

The demonstrations of 2009, with their emotional and communal significance, served as a key turning point for diaspora politics. Protest, as Jasper (1997, 376) writes, "creates a separate world for its participants, in which they do things they can't do in the quotidian world, establish modes of interaction, gain a taste of a just society, or simply dream." The protests from January to May 2009 served as the "field" on which many ideological and symbolic disagreements started to be hashed out and on which the emotional groundwork was laid for continued activism in the community. These discussions would continue throughout the following years, as new organizations were established to carry on the struggle for Tamil rights in Sri Lanka. As the next chapter will show, such transition has not been without difficulty.

CHAPTER FOUR

New Leadership, New Organizations, and New Hurdles

In the small Toronto office of a close confidant of Kumaran Pathmanathan (KP), I sat listening intently and struggling to piece together a detailed account of what occurred following the defeat of the LTTE and the death of Prabhakaran in May 2009. KP, who from 1983 to 2003 coordinated the international fundraising, arms smuggling, and propaganda structure of the LTTE, was reinstated in the LTTE as the head of the new international relations department in late January 2009, after nearly six years away from Tamil politics. As the chief arms procurer for the Tigers and head of the international LTTE structure, KP had found himself juggling many tasks and caught up in an increasingly desperate situation in the final months of the war. Prabhakaran was depending on KP to somehow bring about a cease-fire. One of the phone calls that KP made following his discussions with Prabhakaran was to my respondent, who was soon on a plane to India, where he attempted to convince some Indian officials to intervene. He recalled watching helplessly as the Tigers were decimated in May 2009. Wasting little time, he flew to Malaysia to meet KP.

After discussions with KP, making it clear to him that decisions needed to be made about the future course of the separatist struggle, my respondent called a two-day meeting in Malaysia beginning on June 2, 2009. During this meeting, attended by thirty-five Tamil nationalists from around the world (including four individuals from Canada), ideas were floated around about what to do next. Initially, a kind of "government in exile" was discussed and later abandoned in favor of a more transnational structure. As a second attendee of the Malaysia meeting told me,

> KP convened people from different parts of the world—Tamils who are more towards this end, who are intellectuals and that kind of thing to explore options. And they started with exploring the idea of a government in exile. The problem with this is that it has to have a country to host it and to give room for you to operate there. So, one of the attendees proposed that, instead, a transnational body could do better things, and could operate without anybody's approval, without anybody to ask what you

> are doing. You could mobilize your people . . . it is a lobbying group, ultimately. So that was taken and the proposed name was Transnational Council for Eelam Tamils.

It appeared in the beginning that progress would be smooth despite the internal quarrels between the so-called Nediyavan and KP camps. Nediyavan had been appointed head of the LTTE's international structure following the May 2009 death of Castro, who had been leading the international structure since 2003. As time went on, however, as one of the organizers of the initial meeting exasperatedly told me, "petty bickering took over. These people cannot come out of their . . . notions, you can say. So they wanted to put 'Tamil Eelam' as part of the organization's name and that in itself is killing their purpose." In the end, the new organization came to be called the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE).

Some at the Malaysia meeting insisted that, given the KP-Nediyavan rivalry, the announcement of such a post-LTTE transnational framework should not be made by leaders in either camp. Rather, it should be presented to the world by neutral individuals, thereby keeping the fledgling organization clear of post-LTTE factionalism for as long as possible. "But, ultimately," one of the early organizers lamented, "it was announced to the world by KP. I did not like it." In getting KP to make the announcement to the global Tamil community, the attendees at the Malaysia meeting wagered that following the defeat of the LTTE and the death of Prabhakaran, a long-standing member of the Tigers, indeed the individual responsible for setting up and managing the international structure of the LTTE for so long, would be the ideal mouthpiece to garner the support of the global Tamil community. The third challenge was to get all of the already extant diaspora organizations to support the TGTE. According to one of the organizers, "I came and I wanted to have all the people support it—all the people in the sense of all of the big organizations here like the Canadian Tamil Congress, World Tamil Movement, lawyers' associations, and so on. I was personally talking to the World Tamil Movement people to convince them that the TGTE was a very good option." According to several of my respondents, the World Tamil Movement (WTM) was asked repeatedly to support the TGTE, but, in the end, they stalled.

On July 21, 2009, the Executive Committee of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam issued a press release stating that KP, "who had been appointed as Head of International Relations by our National Leader, will lead us into the next steps of our freedom struggle according to the vision of our esteemed leader." While it was decided that KP would lead the TGTE, his arrest in Thailand in August 2009 made this impossible. KP appointed Visvanathan Rudrakumaran,

a lawyer based in New York, as the acting head of the TGTE. Rudrakumaran wished to set up a working committee for Canada, which was immediately marred by infighting between KP and Castro loyalists. One respondent recalled, "I advised Rudrakumaran, don't take any one of them. Just select some people from the general public, and give [the TGTE] to them. Let them handle it. But, it didn't happen. Nothing happened. It was just fighting between two parties."

Post-LTTE Organizational Trends and Dynamics

The study of social movement organizations (SMOs) in social movement scholarship has seen different authors proposing varying understandings of what constitutes a SMO (della Porta and Diani 2006, 140). John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977, 1218) define an SMO as a "complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or countermovement and attempts to implement those goals." While the broader social movement is significant, much of the mobilization and many of the framing practices invariably occur through the SMOs that make up the social movement. Zald and Roberta Ash (1966, 327) noted long ago that "social movements manifest themselves, in part, through a wide range of organizations. These organizations are subject to a range of internal and external pressures which affect their viability, their internal structure and processes, and their ultimate success in attaining goals." Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism in the diaspora can be seen as a broader social movement, but much of the mobilization and goal articulation of the movement has been carried forward by organizations. Regardless of the diversity of opinion within a social movement, the public face of the movement is often associated with its most prominent organizations (della Porta and Diani 2006, 137).

While organizational direction is often influenced by external factors, internal variables also play a significant role. In the context of post-LTTE diaspora organizations, internal variables following the LTTE's defeat in 2009 included schisms and factionalization. Two of the major preconditions for factionalization are the heterogeneity of the movement's social base and the doctrinal basis of authority (Zald and Ash, 1966, 337). First, while the LTTE was operative, Prabhakaran and the Tiger leadership were adept at alleviating the potential for schism, mainly by killing off or alienating individuals who threatened the sole authority of the movement organization. While the internal diversity of the Tamil nationalist movement was muted for many decades, a noticeable lapse came in 2004 with the defection of Karuna, the LTTE's eastern commander, and

his supporters. Second, concern with doctrinal purity within a social movement can also lead to factionalization. While discussions of doctrinal purity are most relevant for religious movements, the same dynamics can be applied to secular and political movements. As I will elaborate, one of the main drivers of post-LTTE organizational conflict has been a fundamental disagreement about who has been carrying forward the torch of Tamil nationalism in its purest form.

Following the death of a charismatic leader such as Prabhakaran, several changes in the SMO as well as the social movement as a whole can be expected. First, members whose alliance to the SMO was more strongly tied to the leader than to the larger vision of the organization are likely to defect or leave (Zald and Ash 1966, 338). Those who were the most loosely associated with the movement will predictably be the first to leave. Second, the death of a charismatic leader can give rise to factions within the movement that emerge out of rivalries that may have been merely hidden by the efforts of the leader (Zald and Ash 1966, 338). After his death, those who were closest to the leader, those who believe they have the clearest idea of the leader's goals, and those who had put in the most time into the movement seek to exert their control over the future direction of the social movement. Finally, the death of a charismatic leader often initiates a process during which the leadership undergoes a period of professionalization and the administrative structure is rationalized. But for the social movement to even survive following the death of its leader requires certain factors to align.

The death of Prabhakaran and other top leaders of the LTTE was a severe blow to the organization. Social movement leaders are, of course, enormously important for articulating the nature and course of the movement itself. As Sharon Erickson Nepstad and Clifford Bob (2006, 1) point out, leaders "define goals and advance strategies. They mobilize followers, galvanize indigenous organizations, and forge coalitions. They influence responses to external repression, and their action, rhetoric, and style affect conflict outcomes." Leaders are not simply individuals who perform certain tasks within an organization. Rather, the attribution of leadership must be seen in relational terms. Prabhakaran was often called *thalaivar* ("head" or "leader") by supporters of the LTTE, as a term of respect and endearment. Many families have portraits of him in their houses, and some even consider him to have some kind of prophetic ability. One youth recalled that during the protests of 2009, he became tired after hours of chanting and marching through downtown Toronto. After placing the placard with Prabhakaran's picture on the grass beside him as he sat down to recuperate, he was soon approached by an older woman and told that Prabhakaran's portrait should not be strewn around so carelessly. This is

just one illustration of how the attribution of leadership is dependent not only on personality characteristics but also on society's bestowing of such a quality upon an individual. As with the older woman's words at the protest, the attribution of leadership is continually reinforced and becomes reified in the lives of movement supporters.

According to Bob and Nepstad (2007) in their study of the assassination of leaders in social movements, the state-sponsored killing of a movement's leader can be a severe blow to the future viability of the organization. At a very basic level, harsh repression of the movement reduces many of the opportunity structures that are necessary for movement growth (McAdam 1999; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). Harsh repression also makes organizing difficult, ensures that ordinary participants leave the movement as continued involvement comes with new risks, precludes the rise of new organizations mobilizing for similar aims, and creates a sense of hopelessness and resignation (Bob and Nepstad 2007, 1374). While this may have been true for Tamils attempting to mobilize in Sri Lanka, fruitful avenues of mobilization are of course present and available to the Tamil diaspora around the world. As such, even with the defeat of a particular SMO, in our case the LTTE, the broader social movement can thrive in different ways. Of the main factors that could spark broader protest, one is particularly significant in this context—the nature of the harsh repression itself. As Bob and Nepstad (2007, 1374) argue, "Encapsulating a movement's broad grievances in a single dramatic event, such repression may inadvertently reveal the brutality of an unjust social system." The ways in which the Rajapaksa government carried out the final assault on the Tigers in the final months of the war, ignoring human rights organizations, ejecting media personnel, and showing little regard for civilian plight, ultimately laid the groundwork for future lobbying efforts and sustained resistance by both pro- and anti-LTTE elements in the Tamil diaspora. Harsh repression by the Sri Lankan government created what Jasper (1997, 106–107) has called a "moral shock" among members of the diaspora, which fueled collective anger and served as the psychological basis for mobilization.

A social movement's response to the killing of a leader is shaped by several factors, two of which are significant to the period following the death of Prabhakaran: the question of whether the leader embodies a broadly shared identity and the preexisting level of unity or division within the movement (Bob and Nepstad 2007, 1377). Bob and Nepstad (2007, 1380), in one of their many hypotheses related to a social movement's response to the death of its leader, state that "if a leader has ties to overseas communities through a shared group identity, his or her death will usually attract greater third-party support to the

movement. Such identities create a basis for solidarity activism, particularly where a movement leader has actively cultivated it through extensive interactions with overseas communities." A clear example of this is diaspora support for homeland conflicts. It is no secret that over the last several decades the LTTE has set up an elaborate and lucrative international structure dedicated to financing the war with the Sri Lankan government as well as maintaining nationalistic sentiment among the expatriate community. While the LTTE was the dominant SMO of the broader Tamil nationalist social movement, its defeat has led to the rise of new organizations, such as the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam. However, rather than being another grassroots militant uprising in Sri Lanka, the TGTE is one example of a key element of post-LTTE Tamil politics: transnational, demilitarized lobby movements, which, as they save for another violent uprising in Sri Lanka, will likely influence the future course and color of the struggle for Tamil self-determination.

A unified movement is more likely to survive following the killing of its leader than a nonunified movement would be. As Bob and Nepstad (2007, 1380) have noted, leaders often bridge inherent differences within a movement and help to assuage tensions arising from divergent goals and strategies. Post-LTTE organizations in the diaspora, the TGTE included, have been plagued with petty bickering, infighting, and jockeying for power. Effective leaders often "act as linchpins—and their killing can create a crisis for the movement. Although even the most fragmented movement may unite in the immediate aftermath of leaders' slaying, such cohesion is likely to be transitory. Preexisting divisions will quickly reerupt, vitiating any sense that the killing demonstrated the state's insecurity. Even if succession is not an issue, without the former leader, these divisions can degenerate into the movement's fissuring or collapse" (Bob and Nepstad 2007, 1381) While it is too soon to say whether new SMOs like the TGTE will thrive or collapse, infighting and leadership quarrels have certainly been a major aspect of the TGTE for some years since it began.

Leadership Quarrels and the TGTE

As noted above, Zald and Ash (1966, 338) argue that the death of a charismatic leader could lead to the factionalization of a movement. Although effective leaders may be able to suppress internal rivalries and power struggles while they're in power, such a peaceable situation is not at all guaranteed to survive their death. Once the idea for a transnational government was agreed upon in Malaysia, and once it had been announced to the global Tamil community,

candidates began coming forward to contest in the organization's first election, to be held worldwide in May 2010. From the very beginning, the leadership struggle between the so-called KP-Rudrakumaran faction and the so-called Castro-Nediyavan faction hampered the smooth functioning of the TGTE. Supporters of KP or Rudrakumaran with whom I spoke were highly critical of the Castro-Nediyavan faction as well as of the World Tamil Movement in Canada, accusing them of working against the Tamil community, of being power hungry, and of wanting to protect assets gained through years of fund-raising for the LTTE. Members of the Nediyavan faction as well as the current leadership of WTM were less willing to be interviewed. Despite the one-sided nature of the conversations I was able to have, the accusations launched against the Nediyavan faction and WTM remain as evidence of post-LTTE leadership struggles in the diaspora.

TGTE candidates began campaigning throughout April 2010, and elections were held on May 2. Going into the election, supporters of the TGTE argued that Nediyavan and his supporters saw the TGTE as a threat to their authority over the international LTTE structure, which is all that remained after the defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka. Many in the Tamil community in Canada assumed that the Nediyavan faction would take over the TGTE and plot to destroy it from within. In Canada, twenty-five candidates were elected—fifteen candidates in the greater Toronto area, five in western Canada, and five in Quebec and eastern Canada. Around thirty thousand people came out to vote. After the Canadian elections, there was talk in the Tamil community that somewhere between thirteen and fifteen of the twenty-five elected candidates were supporters of WTM and the Castro-Nediyavan camp. Interestingly, those individuals associated with WTM contested the election as a group, shared resources, and ran a successful campaign. Those not associated with WTM, lacking resources and given only a few months to organize a campaign, found themselves barely on the radar of voters on election day.

One elected TGTE representative told me in his Toronto home after the election that because of the decision to run some candidates as a group, individuals not associated with WTM were barely known about. "We did not even see the candidates because the promotion is very tough like that, because you have a short time, you don't know who lives where, which house is a Tamil house. So the independent candidates relied on the Tamil media to put forth our message." One of the organizers of the TGTE elections concurred: "The WTM candidates, they have a very good network. They have a list of voters, a list of Tamils and where they live, because they have been there delivering newspapers, and then they have been collecting funds for the Tigers, so they know who is on

TABLE 7. Planned distribution, by country, of elected representatives and appointed delegates in the TGTE
All positions were not filled after the first election.

Elected Representatives (total of 115)		Appointed delegates (total of 20)	
Australia	10	Caribbean & South America	1
Benelux	3	India	5
Canada	25	Malaysia	3
Denmark	3	Mauritius	1
Finland	1	Middle East	2
France	10	Oceania	1
Germany	10	Rest of Africa	1
Ireland	1	Rest of Asia	1
Italy	3	Rest of Europe	1
New Zealand	2	Singapore	2
Norway	3	South Africa	2
South Africa	3		
Sweden	1		
Switzerland	10		
United Kingdom	20		
United States	10		

their list. So they have a network, they have the resources, they have the money, but above all, they were smart enough to organize as a group, and share the resources." He pointed out that he encouraged the non-WTM candidates to also share their resources, to no avail—they put themselves on the losing end of the campaign from day one. He also noted that the non-WTM candidates were courting votes from community members who may have been wary of becoming involved in the TGTE elections. "There was also fear in the community that the voters' list may fall into Sinhalese hands, making it difficult for them to travel to Sri Lanka in the future," he told me. "But those, the traditional supporters of this Castro base, they, they don't care. They came out to vote, right? So that's why they won. Normal people had not been mobilized; they had not been given assurances that the names of whoever is on that list will not be revealed to the Sri Lankan government."

Other respondents accused WTM of a host of other shady activities, from vote rigging to underhanded tactics aimed at delegitimizing other candidates. One respondent who was not successful in the TGTE election angrily pointed out that WTM was spreading rumors that he was secretly working for the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's intelligence agency. "They knocked on doors and they told people, 'These five candidates are the only ones working for

our cause' while the rest are working for the Sri Lankan government or RAW. A lot of people came up to me and asked, 'Are you really working for RAW? Some people came to my door and said you were working for RAW.'" Others also accused WTM of not maintaining the "doctrinal purity" of the separatist movement, abandoning it in favor of preserving its own power and securing its assets. One of the organizers of the TGTE remarked that Prabhakaran instituted a climate of sincerity (*nanayam*), (self-)control (*kaddupadu*), faithfulness (*kanniyam*), discipline (*oluzhazhaam*), and straightforwardness (*naermai*) in the movement, which had been thoroughly abandoned by WTM. As he noted, "When you talk about *thalaivar* [Prabhakaran], you talk about *nanayam*, *kaddupadu*, *kanniyam*, *oluzhazhaam*, *naermai*. You have to represent that! But these are the people who are responsible for all the blunders!"

Critics accused WTM and the Nediyavan camp of working against the TGTE elections right from when the idea was initially conceived—since the Nediyavan camp could not persuade the global Tamil diaspora that the TGTE was not in their best interests, critics said, the plan shifted to destroying it from within. According to one vocal anti-WTM activist, the WTM leadership was wary about the Tamil community providing support for a transnational democratic framework, as it would seriously challenge their own hold on power. As such, they attempted to derail the postwar conversation about how to move forward as well as the diaspora's support for the TGTE. As he told me,

> When the concept of the TGTE came across the world, including America and the UK and France, Nediyavan's people were thinking, "What are these guys doing?" It's a new concept and no one has this. It happened, so they were waiting, how are they going to deal with it? It is very hard for the LTTE to go in this kind of democratic direction, all right? . . . So they had a problem, if everything goes democratically and things like that, people are going to go there. . . . If WTM doesn't control the TGTE in Canada, then people will be uniting with the TGTE. If they lose control, WTM fears that there will be a backlash from the people. They will tell them, "The funds and the properties that you have don't belong to you, it belongs to the people who fought for us and the people who are suffering right now. All these things have to go back to them." They don't want that to happen.

A month after the TGTE elections, several elected representatives and organizers in Toronto were eager to talk about the Nediyavan-KP feud, as they viewed it as an unfortunate reality of the post-LTTE political climate. One of the elected representatives I spoke to remarked on how the rivalry between the Castro-Nediyavan and KP-Rudrakumaran camps was negatively affecting the smooth functioning of the TGTE: "Every aspect of the Tamil issue is affected

by that. Here and all over the world, every aspect. If I say no, I am telling you a lie. I don't like it but that is the reality. These two groups, in my opinion, they are weakening our cause and are destroying good opportunities." One of the organizers of the TGTE election, clearly exasperated with the turn of events, responded similarly: "Big time. Big time, yes. To me, they are still emotionally driven. Either emotionally driven or very cynically led by people, right? They are not getting that, it's not getting into their heads. That's how I would bluntly put it, right? They don't get it."

According to election organizers, one of the main tactics that WTM used to tarnish the Canadian election results was to bring the Tamil Tiger flag to the postelection celebrations. The election commissioner, Dr. Ashleigh Molloy, who is the current director of Transformation Education Institute, had explicitly told election organizers that if the Tiger flag was brought to any of the election-related events, he would have to renege on his involvement with the TGTE. Many respondents angrily stated their confusion as to why members of WTM would bring the Tamil Tiger flag into the election office. They were unsure as to whether it was part of WTM's strategic ploy to link the TGTE with the LTTE, thereby discrediting it in the eyes of the broader public, or whether they were simply too emotionally attached to the flag and failed to understand the longer-term downside of bringing the flag into public venues. As one of the organizers told me,

> The moment you raise the flag, you are identified with the Tigers, and nobody in the world wants to identify with them, period! Behind closed doors, they may talk to you. Openly, people will not come forward. That we know! We have to use tactics. We can have the flag in our hearts. That is our flag. Nobody can deny that. That is our land. Nobody can deny that. But unless you achieve it, what's the point of doing all this flag waving and hoisting and everything? So, it is a disaster . . . done by these so-called patriotic people. . . . I don't know whether there's anybody who understood *thalaivar*'s [Prabhakaran's] mind. Because the LTTE grew so big, and WTM became a part of it, they think whatever they think is *thalaivar*'s thinking. I don't know if anybody understood him. The way he wanted the diaspora to take over is to take the struggle to the world, so that the world will be in a position to understand the problem and to try to help to solve the problem. That's what he wanted, not to agitate them and turn them away from us.

Another early organizer of the TGTE elections argued that WTM's commitment to the flag was nothing more than performance, as it repeatedly failed to put forth actual solutions to the problems affecting both former LTTE cadres and Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka. As he noted,

KP said that the goals of the TGTE are twofold. In the short-term, we must help the internally displaced people. The long-term goal is to achieve whatever we set out to achieve, which is Tamil Eelam. The TGTE also promotes equal rights for women, minorities, youth, and all that, and all the so-called socialist components are there. So it is one of the best systems, if it is fully implemented. So we need tactics to take it further. So if you bring in the flag and argue that you are doing it because our people, our martyrs, our fighters, died for this—this is an idiotic thing to me, okay? What we have to do is help them, help these fighters who are imprisoned. There are more than ten thousand people, ten thousand cadres there, and there are so many with missing limbs and those who have been badly affected by the war. They are suffering in camps, they cannot come out, people won't openly go to help them out of fear that the government or military will go after them, so they are suffering, you know? I don't see any concrete effort by these Castro people, the so called flag-bearing people, to help these people. So they profess some kind of ownership over these martyrs and fighters, and the flag . . . Who gave them the right to own the martyrs? The martyrs are living in every Tamil's heart, right? You know, nobody owns them and nobody disowns them. So, by taking the flag, they want to hold on to power and hold on to their assets. That's my assessment of it.

The Routinization of Charisma and the Professionalization of Leadership

The argument that Prabhakaran, as early as 2007, was looking to the global Tamil diaspora to carry on the torch of the nationalist movement is perhaps an unconscious effort by members of the Tamil diaspora to convince themselves that the LTTE leader had indeed given some thought to the issue of succession. Under Prabhakaran, it makes sense to think of Tamil nationalism as functioning under "charismatic leadership." According to Max Weber (1947, 358–359), charisma is "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader." Charismatic authority, then, is a type of rule "to which the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific *person*" (Weber 1946, 295). The authority of the charismatic leader arises from the continued demonstration of his or her ability to accomplish amazing feats (like battlefield victories) and his or her followers' continued faith in this power. It of course matters little if the leader *actually* possesses any of these

special powers; it is enough that the followers attribute these abilities to him or her (Bendix 1977, 301; Giddens 1971, 160).

Charismatic authority, for Weber, was only one of three types of domination by which power is exercised in society. According to Weber, when power is exercised through socially agreed upon structures, it is often readily obeyed: "Power is often legitimate, i.e. some people are recognized as leaders or commanders and so are accorded the right to command obedience from others" (Cuff, Sharrock, and Francis 2006, 50). For Weber, there are generally three different kinds of legitimate domination: traditional authority, rational-legal authority, and charismatic authority. Traditional authority derives from respect for historical rules or customs. For example, in many communities, "authority is held by the village elders: those who are the oldest are considered to be most steeped in traditional wisdom and thereby qualified to hold authority" (Giddens 1971, 156). As I will elaborate below, rational-legal authority derives from holding a certain office, from formal codes of law, and from abstract rules and regulations. Charismatic leadership, as discussed, is wholly different from both traditional and rational-legal forms of authority.

Charismatic authority has arisen in many different historical contexts, and such authority depends on both the leader and his or her followers deeply believing in the leader's extraordinary qualities as well as the urgency and authenticity of his or her mission (Giddens 1971, 161). Charismatic authority often comes into direct conflict with established traditional or rational-legal forms of domination. As Giddens (1971, 161) notes, "Charisma is a driving, creative force which surges through the established rules, whether traditional or legal, which govern an existing order." According to Weber, while charisma is by its very nature revolutionary, it is constantly under increasing pressure to transform itself into a more routine or everyday kind of authority. As Weber (1978, 1120) argues, "Every charisma is on the road from a turbulently emotional life that knows no economic rationality to a slow death by suffocation under the weight of material interests: every hour of its existence brings it nearer to this end." What Weber calls the "routinization of charisma" occurs when the followers of a charismatic leader attempt to transform his or her unique and extraordinary qualities, the "gift of grace," into a more permanent and consistent "possession of everyday life" (Allen 2004, 108; see also Trice and Beyer 1986).

Such a transformation generally occurs after the death of the charismatic leader. If the charismatic leader's qualities are indeed rare and unique, what are his or her followers to do when the leader dies? First, there is, of course, the problem of succession. According to Weber, one of the ways in which this succession problem could be diverted is if the leader designates a successor or rep-

resentative. If this does not occur, the close disciples or followers of the leader could take on the responsibility of selecting a qualified successor (Bendix 1977, 305). Both of these options seem to have been embraced by the TGTE, as Tamil leaders in the diaspora attempt to convince the Tamil community that Prabhakaran had actually "passed on" the torch of Tamil nationalism to the expatriate communities around the world. Following from this, it is up to diaspora leaders to select a rightful and qualified successor. As discussed above, this transition following Prabhakaran's death has been fraught with internal strife and struggle and can be characterized by a shift from the LTTE leader's charismatic leadership to what Max Weber terms the rational-legal authority of the TGTE (as well as, of course, other postwar diaspora organizations) (Weber 1946).

The routinization of charisma invariably involves "the devolution of charismatic authority" in the direction of traditional or rational-legal authority (Giddens 1971, 162). The question of which of these directions the movement develops toward depends largely on how followers and disciples deal with the problem of succession after the death of the charismatic leader. While charismatic authority rests on the extraordinary qualities of a *person*, rational-legal bodies like the TGTE are founded on *impersonal* principles, rules, and regulations. As Weber (1946, 299) notes, "Submission under legal authority is based upon an *impersonal* bond to the generally defined and functional 'duty of office.' The official duty—like the corresponding right to exercise authority: the 'jurisdictional competency'—is fixed by *rationally established* norms, by enactments, decrees, and regulations, in such a manner that the legitimacy of the authority becomes the legality of the general rule, which is purposely thought out, enacted, and announced with formal correctness" (emphasis in original). We yield, then, to rational-legal authority not because of an attachment to the gifts of a particular individual but due to the acceptance and internalization of impersonal norms.

The TGTE, as a rational-legal body functioning through rules, regulations, oaths, and elections, is, in addition to undergoing leadership quarrels, in the process of defining itself as a necessary successor to the LTTE, albeit as a postmilitary, international lobby group. As one elected representative from the TGTE told me,

> We need to make our people back home and here trust us, so we have to build credibility with our behavior and our conduct. If you have this in-fighting—KP versus Castro, or the flag versus no flag, or is Prabhakaran alive or dead, there are big arguments going on—we have to come to a settlement. The problem is also that we need to do a self-evaluation of everything that has happened and come to a conclusion

> about the mistakes we made. These are our strengths; and these are our weaknesses. This is what we did wrong; this is what we did right. We accept it and then move forward. Easy. If we pretend that we didn't make any mistakes and we want to move forward, that is a horrible mistake we are making again. I think that part didn't happen. We have to have this self-analysis within the organization. What are the mistakes we made, what are the correct things we did, and what is our strength and what is our weakness and how are we going to move forward? If everybody pretends that they never did any mistakes and everybody was 100 percent perfect and now they want me to follow them, I'm not ready. I'm not ready.

This respondent later went on to remark, without explicitly naming the LTTE, that one of the mistakes made by the Tigers was that they functioned as a totalitarian SMO, whose own record of human rights violations unfairly discredited the social movement as a whole. Others in the TGTE disagree that the organization must necessarily shed all ties to LTTE symbolism or ideology. For most, however, reframing Tamil nationalism and Tamil grievance is one of the prime goals of the TGTE, and the Tamil diaspora more broadly. The same respondent went on to say, "I don't like the radical way of approaching things, because after 9/11 the world is on a different path, so we have to change. We used to have a lot of sympathy on our side but we have lost all the sympathy. . . . We can make human chains, we can make this and that, we can change Tamil affairs, but in world affairs we are *nothing*, because we did not earn the capacity. We did not build the capacity to intellectualize our issue."

For many elected representatives, the shift from the charismatic authority of the LTTE to the rational-legal and bureaucratic structure of the TGTE is, in fact, one of the TGTE's main strengths. They also argue that to function in a global environment, militancy is not the answer. As one of the elected representatives remarked,

> First of all, in the way we conduct our business, our own people lose trust in us. You argue for everything, for stupid and silly things we argue. So what we need to do is build confidence from the community that the people should trust us, these are the right people here, these are the right guys and they know what they are doing. Before we even talk about anything we need to make our base strong. So we have to establish that. . . . We tried the nonviolent way of revolution, then we did the armed struggle, and now we are working on international diplomacy. What else can we do? This is our last chance, so we should do it right. We need to have the right people and the right thinking and the right code of conduct with these members. Now, if you don't do that and if you start doing flag waving and slogan shouting, it could damage our credibility in the mainstream.

According to many of the organizers and representatives, the particular strength of the TGTE is that it is an elected body that has received a mandate from a significant number of people in the Tamil diaspora to represent them. Working with the Tamil diaspora around the world, the TGTE attempts to lobby on behalf of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. As one Canadian representative in the TGTE told me,

> You can say that the Canadian Tamil Congress, for example, is a good organization with lots of members, but they did not get the mandate from the people to talk on their behalf. So then what we can do is we can create a group of people, they get the mandate from the people and speak or act on behalf of Tamil people in Canada or all over the world. So now when we go there and talk to someone, I am not a person from some Canadian Tamil organization, I am a representative of the Tamil people. They voted and elected me. So the Transnational Government is fundamentally necessary because in Sri Lanka we do not have a voice, even though we have elected people, the way the democracy is run we have no voice. So in that context, the transnational setup is very important because we have a lot of problems that we need to fix inside the community and in our back-home situation. . . . So what the TGTE can do is they can tell the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, advise them to do certain things, but they cannot make the decisions for them. We have a certain arrogance when dealing with Tamils in Sri Lanka. We think we know lots of things that they don't know. We are going to tell them what they should want. What is good for them. That's not right. They are smart people; they are not stupid.

However, critics of the TGTE point out that while it may have the mandate of some in the global Tamil diaspora, no mandate was given to the TGTE by Tamils living *in* Sri Lanka. Tamils in Sri Lanka, critics argue, neither asked the TGTE for help nor granted it the permission to speak and work on their behalf. They insist that continued international pressure by diaspora groups may backfire and serve as the ideal foil for the continued subjugation of Tamils by the Sri Lankan government. As journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj (2011) laments, "We have no choice but to live in an undivided Sri Lanka. . . . To rebel against this reality beyond a certain point can only result in terrible disaster. This is the disaster that has been brought upon us by the self-imposed sole representatives and their irresponsible moronic supporters in the diaspora and Tamil Nadu. To continue with this suicidal course is to invite more destruction on the Tamil people living in Sri Lanka. . . . Moreover an already diminishing people would deteriorate further numerically, politically, economically, culturally, and socially."

For Weber, rational-legal authority is naturally associated with what he considers to be the most efficient kind of organizational and administrative struc-

ture: the bureaucracy (Allen 2004, 112–113; Bendix 1977). While the TGTE, from the very beginning, embraced a bureaucratic way of functioning, it was not until its inaugural meeting at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia that the bureaucratic structure reached full bloom. For three days beginning on May 17, 2010, exactly one year after the defeat of the LTTE, around seventy elected representatives from the TGTE met to formalize the organization, work on drafting a constitution, elect a chief executive, and appoint a cabinet. One respondent, who contested for the TGTE elections and lost, still expressed support for the inaugural meeting: "May 17–19, 2009, were our days, all right? So this one goal was on our agenda from last year. On these same days in 2010, we have to be working again. Doing so would tell the international community, 'You know what, one door's closed, this is our next door. We are opening up a new door in the path of democracy and transparency.'" The choice of Philadelphia was also symbolically significant. As is well known, on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence from the British monarchy in Philadelphia. It was also in Philadelphia that, from May to September 1787, the Philadelphia Convention met to discuss problems with the Articles of Confederation, resulting in the drafting of the U.S. Constitution.

After making some phone calls to elected representatives and discussing my attendance with Rudrakumaran himself, I decided to drive down to Philadelphia in 2009. I made the mistake of telling the U.S. Customs official that I was on my way to a "Tamil conference." I was immediately told to go inside to the Customs office and wait for a "higher up," who wished to speak with me. After I waited over three hours at the Canada-U.S. border, this security official finally arrived. As I snuck a peak at his notepad, I noticed the words "PhD candidate" and "Transnational Government" written impeccably in the margins. He asked why I was attending the TGTE meeting, and when I responded that I was doing research for my dissertation, he smiled and replied, "I thought so." After hours of waiting, during which they likely surmised that I was no threat to the United States, I was back on the road to Philadelphia following a mere two minutes of questioning.

The first day of the meeting was almost unbearably tedious. After all of the elected representatives took their seats, a slide show depicting the suffering of the Tamil people was screened, after which a moment of silence was observed. The opening ceremonies continued further, as loud speakers played the national anthems of both the United States and Tamil Eelam. Subsequently, each individual present at the inaugural session proceeded to the front of the room to place a flower at the decorated table memorializing those who had been lost in the civil war. This was followed by a series of speeches by elected representa-

tives arguing that "we must come together as one" and that "through the TGTE, we will create the true democratic voice of the Tamil people." Then there were more patriotic Tamil songs and more speeches. Many of the speeches by the elected representatives praised Rudrakumaran for his leadership abilities, likely attempting to undercut and chastise Castro-Nediyavan supporters who were also at the event. Many of the representatives were also growing weary of the extended ceremony. During the coffee break, one remarked that they needed to move on to more pressing matters. Another more colorfully told me, "It's like going to a wedding and talking for hours afterwards, not letting the bride and groom do what they really want to do."

While about seventy people were actually present in Philadelphia, those representatives who could not travel to the United States convened in cities like Geneva and London and contributed to the Philadelphia meeting via video conference. Once the nationalistic pageantry had come to a close, representatives moved to discussing matters that were of real concern for the future success of the TGTE: the relationship between the TGTE and other Tamil groups like the Global Tamil Forum or the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization; the question of whether there should be membership fees; and the question of citizenship in the TGTE.

An interesting element of the inaugural event was the presence of the LTTE flag. At the start of the event, the podium was placed at the left of the stage in front of an American flag. The LTTE flag was placed at the far right of the stage, with the video camera angled toward the podium in such a way that the flag would not be captured. However, following a coffee break, during which someone presumably complained to the organizers, the flags were switched, with the LTTE flag now standing directly behind the podium in full view of the video camera. Following a second break, the American flag was placed next to the LTTE flag behind the podium. When I asked one of the representatives why the LTTE flag was present at the event at all, he slyly remarked, "preemption," before quickly walking away. According to supporters of Rudrakumaran, the Nediyavan faction within the TGTE had concocted a plan to use the absence of the LTTE flag at the event as a pretext for shutting down the entire meeting. As such, the Rudrakumaran faction decided to allow the flag at the meeting as a preemptive concession aimed at neutralizing any orchestrated backlash from Nediyavan supporters. As one respondent later gleefully remarked, "Nediyavan's people were shocked to see the flag there [*laughs*]. We had to have the flag there. Otherwise, the meeting would have been over in a few hours."

By the end of the meeting, the bureaucratic structure of the TGTE had, for the most part, been established. Visvanathan Rudrakumaran was elected as the

first chief executive of the TGTE, after which delegates selected seven additional members of the Interim Executive Committee. The elected members of the legislative body then converted themselves into a Constituent Assembly, which formed the Constitutional Affairs Committee and tasked it with drafting a constitution for the TGTE. The Constituent Assembly also established eleven committees responsible for handling matters ranging from trade and commerce, economic affairs, and the release of "prisoners of war" (those interned) to international lobbying, seeking welfare for the families of martyrs and cadres, and the investigation of war crimes. The assembly named Pon Balarajan from Toronto as the Speaker for the first assembly of the TGTE. Before the meeting came to a close, delegates made a declaration of commitment to work toward the goals of the organization, namely to fight for the freedom and self-determination of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

In the months following the meeting in Philadelphia, the various representatives worked through their particular committees while also preparing for a more important second meeting. On September 29 and October 1, 2010, representatives met again, this time at the United Nations Plaza Hotel in New York, during which the Constituent Assembly was transformed into the Parliament of the TGTE. It was decided at this meeting that the TGTE Parliament would have a bicameral legislature, consisting of a Parliament of elected representatives and a Senate, which would serve as an advisory body. The head of the government would be the prime minister, who would appoint three deputy prime ministers. Also at the meeting, the Speaker, deputy Speaker, and prime minister were elected. According to supporters of Rudrakumaran, controversy soon arose when the "Nediyavan faction" proposed that the deputy prime ministers, instead of being *appointed* by Rudrakumaran, be *elected* by the assembly. When the issue came to a vote in New York, forty-six delegates voted for allowing the prime minister to appoint his deputies, while forty-three delegates opposed it. While this proposal was dismissed, the vote itself was controversial and would steadily lead to a schism within the organization.

The controversy surrounding the vote can be traced back to the TGTE election results themselves. While the TGTE originally planned to have 115 elected members, by the time of the second meeting in New York, only 97 had been elected. As a TGTE press release noted, this was the case because "elections could not be conducted in some countries, due to local regulations and laws, and in other countries, inquiries are being held due to voting irregularities and complaints received." Election results were delayed in countries like France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia. In total, seventy-four elected representatives were present at the second meeting (forty-seven in New York

and, by video conference, seventeen from Paris and ten from London). A total of twenty-three elected members could not attend any of the three venues. Of these, sixteen representatives applied for proxy voting rights, and eleven were approved. As the official TGTE press release states, "Therefore, on the last day of the second sitting, there were 85 members with voting rights. During the last day of the session, after a long debate, the constitution was voted upon and all 85 (100%) members who were present unanimously accepted the changes and the amended constitution" (Tamil Canadian 2010b).

Afterward some members asked that the unapproved proxy votes be approved, including those from two newly elected representatives from Australia. However, Pon Balarajan, as Speaker, declared the votes to be ineligible "as they were not yet formally approved as elected members by the Country Working Group and have not taken the oath at the parliament" (Tamil Canadian 2010b). As one critic of Rudrakumaran told me, "The Australian members countered that such a requirement was not demanded of other elected members. They also noted that the whole reason for receiving the election results before the second sitting was that so members could cast votes for issues affecting the TGTE." Citing this and other grievances, twenty elected representatives (twelve in New York, four in Paris, and four in London) walked out of the meeting in protest. Rudrakumaran's supporters argue that, even after the walkout, the necessary two-thirds majority was present in order to vote on the constitution and elect the Speaker and the prime minister. Critics, however, disagree and argue that, because the two-thirds majority was not present, the constitution in its current form is invalid.

As such, when all of the representatives were asked to take an oath to the TGTE following the second meeting, critics of Rudrakumaran scoffed at the idea. As one of them told me, "Two or three weeks later, Pon Balarajan didn't try to do some kind of electronic voting on the constitution or anything of that sort. All he said was, 'This is the constitution; accept it by such and such date.' I asked him what authority he had to send that e-mail to me. At the second sitting, the constitution wasn't put out for voting and approved by two-thirds of the house, because two-thirds of the house wasn't even there." As one of the elected representatives, a Rudrakumaran supporter, recalled later, "The Nediyavan group had a plan to make a couple of people as deputy prime ministers who were under their control, to curtail the power of the prime minister. They wanted to have one guy from Europe and another from Canada. . . . Since Europe and Canada are under their control, they thought they could easily win the deputy prime minister positions. They wanted to control the TGTE. They need to control. They need to create two deputy prime minis-

ters under their control, so they can put Rudra in trouble. We realized that." Little would change over the several months following the meeting in New York, as e-mails were sent back and forth between dissidents and those who remained in the TGTE. Following the walkout, and particularly after March 2011, the group of dissidents formalized their organization under the banner of TGTE-Democrats (TGTE-D). As the TGTE-D press release makes clear, the controversy surrounding the appointment of deputy prime ministers was still simmering: "Handing over the entire powers of the transnational movement of Eelam Tamils to the hands of one individual, elected with a simple majority, and residing within the jurisdiction of another country, is against every spirit of transnationalism. If the transnational government is such a one-sided affair, shouldn't there be an opposition in the assembly? The TGTE-Democrats were tolerating all irregularities for the sake of evolving the transnational polity of Eelam Tamils and not to disturb the process. We are not against any individual, but we can't pledge the powers of a nation into the hands of any individual" (TamilNet 2011c). As one of the representatives from the TGTE-D told me, "We had disagreements on other policies, but our issue was specifically with the constitution—not accepting what Pon Balarajan was throwing up as the constitution. That was the issue that united us, I suppose, as the TGTE-Democrats."

In a long interview, the representative from TGTE-D noted that their primary grievance was with certain parts of the TGTE constitution, namely sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.8. The former section stipulates, "The Prime Minister shall be elected from the TGTE members of Parliament by the TGTE members of Parliament by a secret ballot with a simple majority vote." The latter section states, "The entire Cabinet may be dissolved with the approval of more than two-thirds majority of the total members of the Parliament." According to critics, Rudrakumaran runs the TGTE in such a way that a two-thirds majority is next to impossible to achieve. According to a TGTE-D representative,

> Twenty of the 135 are appointed members; a lot of seats have not been filled anyway; and then with the removal of 30 or so members from the TGTE, you have something like 60-odd members being filled by an election commission, which is appointed by the prime minister! So Rudrakumaran appoints 3 people as election commissioners. They don't have a frame of reference; they choose whatever method they want to appoint or get 50 to 60 members into Parliament, and then with the support of about 45 of those, his government carries on! So, in our collective point of view, we don't see that as the type of organization that the TGTE claims to be, or makes our people believe it to be.

As such, members of the TGTE-D repeatedly refused to take the oath of allegiance to the TGTE. By the end of March 2011, it became obvious that TGTE delegates were going to "expel" representatives from TGTE-D, arguing that close to six months had passed since representatives were told that they must sign the oath of allegiance to the TGTE in order to sit in Parliament. On March 27, 2011, Balarajan sent a letter to delegates in the TGTE-D announcing that they were being formally expelled from the Transnational Government: "I hereby inform you, who was elected by the people to the parliament of TGTE, that your official membership in the parliament has been revoked due to your failure to take the necessary oath to accept the TGTE parliament. Many requests were sent to you since October 17, 2010 to take the oath to accept the TGTE parliament. I also sent you another letter stating that if you do not take the oath by March 5, 2011 you will voluntarily forfeit the position to which you were elected by the people" (TamilNet 2011a).

As TamilNet (2011a), which aired many of the grievances of the TGTE-D, announced, "The 'speaker' of the TGTE Assembly, Pon Balarajan, belonging to the Rudrakumaran faction of the TGTE, sent letters on Saturday to elected members of the TGTE who identified themselves as Democrats that they were 'expelled' from the TGTE Assembly. . . . With pretext or without pretext, the Rudra faction in the TGTE has decided to 'get rid of' Democrats in order to move in a hurried way to materialize a pre-conceived agenda, sources close to Democrats alleged." When I asked one of the TGTE-D representatives questions about how they planned to function in relation to the TGTE, he noted that, as far as they were concerned, they were elected representatives of the TGTE as well, and a particular "faction" does not have the authority to expel them at will. "They don't talk to us; we don't talk to them," he said. "We function as the TGTE ourselves. They function as the TGTE themselves. Within the TGTE, we function as the TGTE-Democrats, so we almost function as a parallel TGTE."

He went on to point out that the constant accusation that they are part of a secretive and destructive "Nediyavan faction" is nothing more than political maneuvering. In essence, he asserted that their expulsion was planned and carried out by several supporters of Rudrakumaran. Accusing them of being part of the Nediyavan faction, he argued, is just a way to shut down criticism and stifle open debate:

> We don't take orders from Nediyavan. In fact I haven't spoken to him in years. Our case is based on what has happened in the TGTE. So, for example, if the four members from Australia had been allowed to vote, a different course may have emerged. I wouldn't say that where we are at the moment was planned in any way. It's just that

> one thing led to another and we got here. I suspect that some members of the Rudra faction actually regret the state that we are in. But I do believe that the core group within the Rudra faction wanted to get to this stage. They wanted to kick out quite a few members. This argument about Castro versus KP or Rudrakumaran versus Nediyavan, it's maybe created to take attention away from the real issues. The whole Nediyavan story is just a diversion tactic from the Rudra faction to take attention away from the constitution. They don't want to debate it, so they just . . . if anyone says anything about the constitution, it's always "you are with the Nediyavan faction" or "you are here to spoil it or break it up." It's how you stop people from critiquing the constitution. So, we can't really say anything [*laughs*]. It's their way of defending themselves: they say, "You are doing it because Nediyavan told you to do it."

Much of the recent history of infighting within the TGTE points to an important characteristic of post-LTTE organizations in the diaspora: they are administrative structures, populated by individuals who gain and lose legitimacy based on their adherence to legal principles. Leadership struggles as well play out not by sword but by statute. The so-called Rudrakumaran faction recognized that the expulsion of the so-called Nediyavan faction, in order to be seen as *legitimate* in the community, must be grounded on something more than personal dislike of the other group. In other words, since the TGTE had structured itself along rational-legal lines, the expulsion of some individuals based simply on personal enmity would have undermined the structure itself.

With the "expulsion" of TGTE-D delegates, the future course of the TGTE was initially uncertain. While supporters of Rudrakumaran insist that the leadership struggle is effectively over following the expulsion, such a conclusion is likely not shared by the TGTE-D. In addition to the perceived weakening of the KP/Nediyavan feud, TGTE officials point out, Tamil people in the diaspora also want to move forward and try something new. They argue that the Tamil community will quickly grow wary of leadership quarrels and give support to the organization that provides tangible solutions to the problems facing Tamils in Sri Lanka. As one elected official told me, "The community as a whole, they wanted to have a different approach. I always hear people saying that whatever we did over the last several years didn't work, so we should try something new. They don't know what this new thing is going to be, but they want a new approach. We should clean up this mess and move forward. If you want to do the same thing as before, I don't think the people will be ready for that." As of this writing, while some TGTE officials are confident that their organization will eventually have the full support of the Tamil diaspora, only time will tell whether such optimism is justified.

Tamil Youth and the TGTE

Full support, though, could only come with the backing of Tamil youth in the diaspora. In interviews with Tamil youth in Canada, much of their opinion with respect to the TGTE was primarily characterized by a satisfaction that the future course of Tamil nationalism is being formulated in a different, more peaceable manner than had been done in the past. However, many also expressed a real uncertainty about the usefulness and purpose of groups like the TGTE, the TGTE's capacity to achieve its goals, and whether the organization is doing anything at all. Such views persist even as the TGTE has, recently at least, stepped up its public and private lobbying efforts. In April 2011, for example, the TGTE launched a signature campaign to urge the United Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-Moon, to refer Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court prosecutor and called for a commission of inquiry into war crimes. In June 2011 the TGTE announced that it was debating a bill calling for the ratification of the International Criminal Court. As stated in the press release, "By ratifying this treaty, the TGTE is taking an important step in becoming a responsible member of the international community and is emphasizing the importance of the [International Criminal Court]. It should be noted that Sri Lanka did not ratify this treaty and this treaty is most relevant to Tamil Eelam citizens due to genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed against them by the Sri Lankan state" (TGTE 2011a).

In January 2011 the TGTE achieved a small symbolic victory, announcing that it had been invited by the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement to visit South Sudan following its vote for an independent state. According to the TGTE, it was "sending a delegation to participate in the celebrations and to discuss possibilities of assisting Southern Sudan in their development efforts through Tamil Diaspora expertise in selected fields" (TGTE 2011b). The TGTE applauded the support given to South Sudan by the international community and asked the world "to give an opportunity for Eelam Tamils to determine their destiny the same way." Following the creation of South Sudan on July 9, 2011, TGTE representatives flew to the new state and joined the celebrations as official guests of the new government of South Sudan. Rudrakumaran, in an interview with the *Sunday Indian*, welcomed "the recent independence of subjugated nationalities in Kosovo and South Sudan" as a development that "gives us confidence for achieving an independent Tamil Eelam" (Asokan 2011).

One of the main challenges facing the TGTE in gaining support from Tamil youth relates to the weakness of the rational-legal structure of the organization itself. With charismatic leadership, at least in Prabhakaran's case, followers re-

mained committed even during moments of hiatus, inactivity, or military and political failure. There remained a high level of trust and faith that Prabhakaran, despite setbacks, would guide the Tamil community toward a just addressing of their grievances. Followers never questioned Prabhakaran's commitment to the cause or his leadership abilities. Unlike the dynamic and exciting nature of charismatic authority, rational-legal structures are often characterized by a banal and mechanistic progress toward desired ends. Army fatigues are replaced by business suits, assault rifles give way to executive portfolios, and the glories of military victory are superseded by press releases and signature campaigns (Bendix 1977, 312; Allen 2004, 115).

While many of the youth I interviewed praised the TGTE for proposing to move away from the restrictive politics of the LTTE, they also expressed skepticism that those elected to head the TGTE knew how to make such a transition. As one youth in Toronto, a practicing lawyer, told me,

> So in order for the TGTE to be the group we rally behind, they have to do good things. And I think the best thing to do is seek justice for those who died, unnecessarily. And so if they follow that mandate for the next three years, then I am behind them. The reason I was okay with that whole dictatorship thing [under the LTTE] before is that it was in the context of an armed movement. And in an armed movement, you don't have any other way of doing it; there is no democracy in an armed movement. In an armed movement, you have the Tigers who have thirty years of experience. And so you have to defer to them in how to conduct a freedom struggle. So in that sense I defer to them. But now I'm more apt to move us toward Tamil Eelam than 99 percent of these guys. So why defer to them? Who are they to defer to in a democratic institution?

Many other respondents pointed out that while the LTTE served its purpose, it ultimately had little success in marketing or selling Tamil nationalism to the broader public. They hoped that organizations like the TGTE would be more successful in this enterprise. "I think we got to move on and see what's next, and not hold on to the past," one youth in Toronto, who was deeply affected by the events of May 2009, told me. "Even before, I think the biggest mistake is we did not focus on communicating the message to the people that needed to know the message. . . . We were always in a defense mode. And we never got to be out there making friends in political realms. Making a case for ourselves."

Still others were relieved to see the demise of the LTTE, as it could herald an open space for debate and discussion about Tamil identity and the future viability of nationalism itself. Many of them argued that any political maneuvering by the diaspora must incorporate ideas from the Tamil community in Sri Lanka

and take their needs and on-the-ground realities seriously. One youth, while expressing skepticism about the TGTE, was somewhat hopeful about the prospect for a free space for conversation in a post-LTTE framework:

> The Transnational Government, I don't think they've really defined very clearly how they're going to go about their objectives. I think it's really important that they incorporate the Sri Lankan Tamil voice in Sri Lanka because those are the people that are dealing with everything, you know, and I think they should be the major voice. I think it's really important that they incorporate multiple voices in the diaspora community and, first of all, acknowledge that there are multiple voices. Because I think they should realize, if they haven't, that part of the reason the LTTE was attacked so heavily was because they didn't incorporate these multiple voices and that was one strategy. It didn't work, so are they going to change the strategy or are they going to follow the same type of strategy? And hopefully they'll realize they can get solidarity through multiple voices as well. It's just you need a good leader to pull all those voices together.

The nature of the leadership struggle in the diaspora, and within organizations like the TGTE in particular, elicited different reactions among the youth in the diaspora. Some responded with anger, others with hope, and still others with a kind of resigned frustration. "I only voted in the TGTE election because my parents wanted me to vote," explained one youth—a sentiment I had heard repeatedly. "The truth is I still believe that some of these people are doing it to build a name for themselves, and I really don't support that." Another was highly critical of the TGTE, arguing that it wasn't explained well to the Tamil community in Canada and that the elected representatives leave much to be desired. As he noted,

> The person that was in charge of the family [Prabhakaran] is no more. He would know how to adjust to things. When we don't have that, everybody wants to take that leadership. And that's what we are having now. The Transnational Government was a big word for the Tamil community. The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam—it's almost a sentence. And there were no people to define it. It wasn't sold to the people the way it should have been. Some people took that to their advantage to discard it. They felt that the control they had was going towards this new form of government, but they didn't even know what it was. If they knew what it was, and argued against it, then I would understand. These guys had no idea. That's why the Transnational Government failed. I don't see anything in it that gives me hope. Also the people who are part of it . . . it's a joke.

But what some saw as a leadership struggle, others understood as a competition among different ideologies for viability in the Tamil diaspora—a reality that wasn't necessarily unhealthy, they felt, as such open debate, if not accompanied by dirty politics, could contribute much to the community. The debate over whether the TGTE should openly embrace the LTTE flag as part of the organization is one such example. As one respondent pointed out, it matters less what the representatives of the TGTE decide and more that these decisions are made through open debate:

> As long as you are able to have an open process where people from different ideologies will be able to participate and get elected, then that is what it is about. . . . But if they let this get to their heads and then they become the sole leadership and they become the voice without actually consulting the community or getting the community involved in the decision-making process, then it would be a problem. It would not be just a problem for them—it would be a problem for the community as a whole, because if this fails, I am pretty sure even the ones that are right now somehow tangentially connected to the community will have nothing to do with it after that. . . . As for the flag, it's again the same issue of optics. It's an important issue, but it's not an issue that we need to fight about in public. Especially in a country like Canada . . . if the TGTE decides as a collective to have the flag as the TGTE flag, then I'll be okay with it. But, again, it's about optics and where you use the flag and where you don't use the flag.

For those who believed that WTM had infiltrated the TGTE with plans to undermine it from within, the TGTE, while a good idea, was almost doomed to fail from the very beginning. In addition, they argued that with WTM involvement, the old guard of the LTTE still has influence in the diaspora, the elections were conducted in a questionable manner, and non-WTM candidates were unfairly disadvantaged. As one university student argued,

> I think on paper the TGTE sounds great, but I think in practice it's been very messy, especially given the recent elections. I think ultimately what happened was that the people elected were people who were part of that machinery of the Tigers, who were, you know, WTM people or who had always been supporting the more radical side of things. At the end of the day, I think, it is back to what we've always been doing, which is not a good thing. . . . There were a lot of very strong candidates who were sending the right messages, who would be able to speak to the Canadian community in a way that would present the Tamil community in the best possible light. And I think all of those people weren't given a fair chance.

In the overall leadership struggle between the so-called KP-Rudrakumaran and Castro-Nediyavan factions, some of those I interviewed expressed that both sides should be blamed for allowing the youth to enter the fray. The leadership, they argue, should have dealt with whatever disagreements they had at the leadership level. Allowing the diaspora to take sides and become embroiled in their rivalries has not been beneficial to the community. Others could not help but roll their eyes and point out that the "crabs in the bucket" attitude may, unfortunately, be a deep-seated characteristic of Tamil politics. When asked for her thoughts on the KP-Castro leadership quarrels, one student responded,

> Every single person always has conflict with one another, whether we like to say we love each other or not, we always have conflicts but then at the end of the day, it's like a relationship. People say, in a relationship, keep the shit between the two of you. If it goes beyond you two, everyone else will put in their opinions, and it'll be ruined, and it's true. It should've been kept at the leadership level; nobody else has a say. I think the only person who can call anyone a traitor should've been *thalaivar* [Prabhakaran]. No one else beyond that. Why? Because I never picked up a gun. I'm sorry, but I wasn't ready to sacrifice my life, nor was I ready to put cyanide in my mouth and just be dead the next second. So for me to sit here and criticize or for me to sit here and judge is completely wrong. I never did half of the things that anyone else out there has done. When you don't know, you should never comment on it and I think that's a big flaw in our community. Today, the reason our community's so split and ridiculously obnoxious, and pretty much starting all these stupid organizations, is that they don't even understand the purpose or meaning behind what they're doing. Call me bitter, but it's the truth.

The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam, a particularly novel formation following the defeat of the LTTE, is struggling to maintain credibility, garner followers, and achieve a position of leadership in the global Tamil diaspora. As discussed, the organization is marred by infighting, leadership rivalries, and schisms. Indeed, because the birth pangs of the TGTE have been so fraught with controversy, widespread support for the organization remains, as of this writing, out of reach. As Tamil youth in Canada have made sense of some of the challenges following the defeat of the LTTE as well as of the tragic loss of civilian life in May 2009, their activism in the diaspora during the post-LTTE transition has for many meant not only a heightened awareness of the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka but also shifting orientations toward nationalism, Tamil Eelam, Prabhakaran, and the LTTE. The transition following the defeat of the LTTE sheds light on the multifaceted ways in which these youth conceive of their future role as members of the Tamil diaspora.

CHAPTER FIVE

Tamil Youth and Postwar Movement Identity

It is perhaps not an exaggeration to state that the issue that most worries and confuses many law enforcement officials and policy makers in Canada when it comes to diaspora politics is the role of youth. While many diaspora communities in Canada are concerned about their youth radicalizing to violence, there is often a general misunderstanding that persists when it comes to youth activism and youths' commitment to human rights and social justice. During the Tamil diaspora demonstrations of early 2009, for instance, many in the media wondered how it was possible that youth who were born in Canada and who had never visited Sri Lanka nevertheless camped out for days on the frigid streets of Toronto, chanting about injustices that were happening thousands of miles away in a country they knew about only through pictures and choppy stories told by their parents. Scholars also have long wrestled with how to account for the persistence of nationalism in a globalized world. The construction of identity (national identity included) under conditions of globalization is largely a process of hybridization, whereby individuals fashion complex identities that may bring together incompatible or inconsistent parts of themselves (Scholte 2005, 226).

The process of hybrid identity construction, while acknowledged by scholars and policy makers, is often too easily forgotten. Indeed, debates about the "dangers" of diaspora communities that are intimately concerned with homeland conflicts often follow a typical line of argument: perhaps the host country has done an inadequate job of assimilating or integrating these individuals. Why else would a significant portion of an individual's civic involvement be aimed at a country he or she emigrated from years ago or may not have even visited? Such an either/or framework is destined to lead researchers astray. The vast majority of literature in social psychology makes clear that individuals' support for their in-group does not automatically mean they evince hostility toward an out-group (McCauley et al. 2011). Similarly, it is not the case (as confirmed by almost everyone I interviewed) that Tamil youth in Canada who support the LTTE also blindly express hostility toward the Sinhalese community or are not assimilated into Canadian society.

The Tamil diaspora around the world has often been derided as the "pro-Tiger diaspora" or as blind followers of Tiger propaganda. While these terms would certainly be accurate in describing some individuals in the diaspora, including a few of my respondents, such a homogenous grouping offers a deeply inaccurate image of what is actually many individuals residing in various countries and differing political contexts around the world. To be sure, in discussing "Tamil nationalism" as a social movement, I am not in any way suggesting that the movement is homogenous. Not only is identity fluid and shaped by social and cultural contexts, but it is also indeed quite rare for social movements to be homogenous or to be mobilized around a sole integrative identity (della Porta and Diani 2006, 98).

Many of the youths I interviewed made it clear that mainstream Canadian society almost always misunderstood or exaggerated what they thought to be their fairly nuanced views about Tamil nationalism or the LTTE. I myself was at times taken aback while talking to certain participants whom I presumed I had "figured out" based on their movement activities. For example, there was the die-hard LTTE supporter who lambasted the organization for its repeated mistakes and who now admitted that working toward ethnic harmony was a priority. Then there was the activist working toward ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka who expressed a deep admiration for the Tamil Tigers as a movement "that was there for us when no one else was." These individuals' complicated ways of positioning themselves exemplify the notion of hybrid identities in a globalized world, an idea that complicates the argument that youth activists in the Tamil diaspora are a homogenous movement, dedicated to carrying on the LTTE torch. This final chapter examines in depth the varied viewpoints that are articulated by Tamil youth in Canada and argues more broadly that such diversity and the contentious politics that it often produces is a key characteristic of postwar diaspora politics.

Postconflict Tamil Youth Identity

Growing up in Canada, I always thought of myself as Sri Lankan. Tamil, to be sure, but "from Sri Lanka." It was not something I thought too much about, and I assumed that most other Tamils saw themselves in the same way. I had a sociological blind spot when I began my field research with the Tamil community in Canada, taking the Sri Lankan identity marker for granted. But it soon became apparent that many youths in Canada were rethinking even this most basic of labels. Following the brutal onslaught of 2009 and the humanitarian ca-

tastrophe that subsequently ensued in Sri Lanka, many in the Tamil community felt alienated from Sri Lanka as a social, political, and national construct. For them, the massacre at Mullivaikkal in the final weeks of the conflict was only the crescendo of a decades-long ballad of steady political exclusion. For many youths I spoke with, then, it was the Sri Lankan government that first rejected the Tamil people in their midst. In eschewing the Sri Lankan label, some youths argued, they were simply acknowledging what the Sri Lankan government had long communicated through its policies: that the Sri Lankan and Tamil communities are fundamentally different and cannot live together. As one Tamil man in Toronto pointed out, "If we were truly Sri Lankan and they respected us as civilians in Sri Lanka, they would have showed better respect towards the Tamil people than what they're doing to the Tamil people right now. But clearly the president does not believe that the Tamil people are part of Sri Lanka. From the day I was born to the day I lost my friends and family back home to the day I came to Canada, I always believed that I was from Tamil Eelam." Another respondent pointed out that, following a visit to Sri Lanka and his experiences at military checkpoints, he felt less and less like he was accepted in the country.

> My background is Tamil, yeah. I mean, Tamil Eelam is my background. Like after my whole trip to Sri Lanka, I couldn't—it's like I completely changed after that. I was never a Sri Lankan no more. Like I was never—I couldn't—I never considered that Lankan part any more after that. Now I'm a Tamilan. It's just who we are. Like—we're not recognized—I don't think we're properly recognized in Sri Lanka as Sri Lankan. . . . We're always going to be looked at as Tamils if we're living in Sri Lanka. As much as we want to be living as equals.

A Tamil woman I spoke with in Toronto who disagreed with much of this rethinking of identity pointed out that as a Tamil, she refuses to allow herself to be excluded from being a part of Sri Lanka. For her, giving up her Sri Lankan identity marker is simply giving in to the divisiveness that has been a part of the conversation around Sri Lankan politics. As she pointed out,

> I think it's important for me because I've had personal experiences in Sri Lanka, like I've been to Sri Lanka, I've visited. I have memories of being Sri Lankan. . . . I don't feel like it's the right of any government to take that identity away from me. I do feel like, with the war, that that was something that was going on, and if I get rid of that Sri Lankan identity, I almost feel like I'm giving in to that—because that is my identity and that's something that nobody can take away from you. . . . Identity to me is really what your experiences are, and my experiences are having lived in Sri Lanka, having friends who are both Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, you know, that mix of Sri Lankans.

A related and equally important conversation taking shape among Tamil youth in the diaspora is whether Tamil identity necessarily includes an attachment to Tamil nationalism or separatism. From 2010 to 2011, these kinds of conversations were not overtly taking place at public events and gatherings organized by the activist elements in the Tamil community. Starting in late 2011, however, I began fielding questions from Tamil youth in Toronto who were growing disillusioned with the hypernationalist rhetoric being put forth by groups like the Tamil Youth Organization and wondered whether there was a new way to think about Tamil identity in Canada. It became apparent that groups like the Tamil Youth Organization (TYO) had successfully conveyed the message to many Tamil Students' Associations at Canadian universities that they had their finger on the pulse of the global Tamil diaspora as well as the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. As such, TYO was in the best position to initiate Tamil youth into a renewed, internationalized, nationalist movement. The fact that TYO was directly founded by the LTTE in 2003 is wielded as a powerful trump card—the organization argues that it is, in effect, the "older brother" of the struggle who has the responsibility of ensuring that the younger generation is educated and initiated into the movement. If, perhaps inevitably, there is a concerted response from the next generation of Tamil youth to TYO's mandate, it is too early to know what this will look like. These developments are still in their infancy, but they speak not only to the changing identity formations of Tamil youth in the diaspora but also to how diaspora organizations may reconfigure themselves to meet these new demands.

In the next section I turn to reflections of Tamil youth both on the past and about the future, looking at how Tamil youth conceive of the relative importance of Tamil Eelam going forward as well as the future role of the diaspora community in homeland politics. Tamil youth express multifaceted views about the overall impact of the LTTE, Canada's stance on the Tigers as a terrorist organization, Prabhakaran's leadership, and the rumor circulating among some in the Tamil diaspora that Prabhakaran is actually still alive. These same Tamil youth in Canada see a renewed role for themselves and the diaspora in general with respect to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Reflecting on the Past

The LTTE

While the running assumption among some academics and policy makers with respect to the post-LTTE Tamil diaspora is that its members are blind supporters

of the movement, the issue is much more complicated. The majority of Tamil youth I interviewed saw the LTTE as an empowering force for the community but also as an organization that was deeply flawed at its core. It, as one respondent put it, "gave us a backbone" but was also "imperfect." My respondents often cited reports of the LTTE's use of child soldiers and of Tamil civilians as human shields as well as the forced recruitment of cadres to bracket their overall admiration for the movement. When asked whether the LTTE was beneficial or detrimental for the Tamil community overall, one Tamil man observed,

> You know, the Tamil people had no one fighting for them, but like, of what I know, it started off very different than where it ended. It's quite an accomplishment to have that big a military power. . . . They were there when no one else was there to fight for them and that's why I think a lot of people appreciate them, and I think that's where a lot of the allegiances come from, and they also lost people, the sacrifices they've had to make. . . . But do I like some of the other things that war makes you do? No, it was unjustified. They were fighting for Tamil Eelam, but they forgot that the people are Tamil Eelam, not just the land, right? If you abuse your people, then you're never going to win the war.

During another interview, the respondent expressed overall support for the LTTE. This was nothing new among my interview participants, but I grew increasingly surprised by his support as he continued to tell his story: "They even kidnapped one of my mom's uncles, but there was a reason why they did that also. Like, I agree with everything, because he was quite well off, didn't want to give any money. There was a struggle going on, and without financial support you can't do anything, right? A lot of members in our community are quite selfish."

Those I spoke to often share ambivalent thoughts about the past presence of the LTTE alongside worrisome diagnoses for the future. A Tamil woman from Toronto, while reflecting on what the absence of the Tigers might now mean for the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, recalled a visit to Sri Lanka during which she heard stories of the LTTE recruiting children into the movement:

> I think the Tigers, despite all their failings and despite, you know, all the negativity associated with them, were still a force that fought for the culture and fought for the people. And now that force is gone, and I'm not sure if that will be to the benefit or the detriment of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. I'm not saying the Tigers were like perfect, like I . . . when I went back to Sri Lanka, we went to an orphanage at which the owner told us that the Tigers came and took some of the children there to be part of their . . . Like I know that that happens, and I know it's terrible. But I think

> like . . . I don't know how to articulate this, but I think that they were still a force that furthered, or tried to keep Tamil issues on the agenda, and now that they're gone I think it will just be easier for the government to sweep it under the rug.

This view that at least the Tigers "were there" to protect the Tamil people from the Sri Lankan government was something I heard often during my interviews. One particular Tamil man who had been heavily involved in Tamil organizations in Canada spoke at length about how "LTTE ideology," as he called it, was a powerful driver of Tamil identity in Sri Lanka:

> I think Tamil Eelam ideology is different from LTTE ideology. The LTTE ideology from day one has been "pulikalin thaagam tamil eela thayagam," or basically, "the LTTE thirsts for a free Tamil Eelam." So the LTTE ideology, and that's an organizational ideology, is basically to do everything and anything, and to make the ultimate sacrifice for the complete liberation of the Tamil homeland. This is the most extreme position and I don't think there could be another extreme to this. This is the most extreme position that you could have, that they made the ultimate sacrifices all along. So that is the ultimate position but I don't think everybody in our community will have the same commitment or the dedication or the same view with regards to Tamil Eelam, because I don't think a lot of our people will say, "Okay, I will give my life because we need a separate state." I don't think that is the case, and rightfully so—I don't think everybody needs to die just to get a separate state. So the *LTTE* had to have that position, and that is fine and that is their ideology, but as a community with different organizations and different structures, we should be able to recognize that we may have different approaches to winning back Tamil peoples' rights. . . . For the LTTE, everything they did was through that lens of separation. That is why they have that sort of single-minded dedication to their cause—they made deals, they broke off pacts, and they may have walked out of things, but I don't think anybody can say that they moved away from that ideology. It's a good thing too. I wouldn't say that was a negative thing, because we as a community needed that direction and they were able to provide that.

For him "LTTE ideology" is nothing more than the single-minded fight for self-determination and the "liberation" of Tamil Eelam. Earlier in the interview, he had explained the significance of the LTTE for his own identity as well as for the Tamil people in general. While he did not explicitly speak in the language of prophecy, the emergence of the LTTE ideology, for him, signaled the arrival of a new message, a new vision, and a new direction. It was, and one perhaps cannot quarrel too much with the overall accuracy of the statement, a turning point in the history of the Tamil people. To quote him at length:

> The Tamil community is where we are because of the Tigers, so it doesn't matter whether we look at it as good or bad. Here was a community that didn't care what was happening next door, let alone in the village, in the city, or the North and East. We would shut the doors when there was a disturbance happening next door and only intervene if there was something that came at our throats. That was our mentality . . . the Tigers, or their ideology, was able to get us out of those things. They gave us the vision, the ideology gave us the drive to go out there and do things and it gave us the space to think about equality, equal rights in the community context, and also to go out there and explore things that we were not doing. I don't think our community would have ever been in this position if not for the Tigers. . . . The struggle gave us the space to explore a lot of things. In one way, looking at thirty-five thousand martyrs—these were the same youth who would have otherwise been out there drenching [some Bollywood actor's picture] with milk or whatever it is. The same youth—they were drawn from the same community that is doing that. But the struggle was able to give them the direction, the commitment to actually sacrifice their lives, to put their community's future ahead of their own future, and to do the ultimate sacrifice, so that in itself is a success and that in itself is clearly something that wouldn't have ever happened. Some of the negatives? So, I think personally some of the challenges that we as a community have . . . and it is again a strategic decision to have the LTTE as the sole voice of the Tamils. I don't think it is a bad thing. I don't think it was a bad thing at that point in time because you obviously need one organization or one voice to represent us, so that they are not in a position to divide and rule us. So that was a strategic decision, but what is concerning is that this process has somehow taken us to a point where we are very suspicious of different opinions.

Cheran (2000, 175) has similarly pointed out this way of framing Tamil nationalism in terms of an earlier period of disempowerment that ended with the arrival of the Tigers, who brought with them a sense of "pride and valour" for Tamils in Sri Lanka. As he writes, "In the current incarnation of the nationalist discourse, the Tamil is no longer a 'paraiyah' [outcast] Tamil. S/he is a Pulithamil (Tiger Tamil)" (Cheran 2000, 175). One of the main hurdles currently affecting the Tamil community essentially arises out of the success of the LTTE in professing itself as the sole representative of the Tamil people. My respondent reflected back on how the arrival of the LTTE brought with it a space in which a new "empowered Tamil" could take root. However, this new space had its own limitations. It brought with it opportunities, but also constraints. It gave Tamils a new language, but one with a limited vocabulary. He went on to point out that this language has become so internalized that many in the community are now suspicious of new ways of speaking and advocating. The success of the LTTE

during its tenure, then, may have created the very hurdle that could prove to be insurmountable in a post-LTTE environment. As he pointed out,

> There is no more space, especially in the majority of the community, to have dissenting voices or no more willingness to listen to that dissenting voice. I think for that to happen will take some time, because after such a domineering political force you can't go back to a multiparty system overnight, but I think what is important now is the recognition that the future will not be possible if we don't make that mental change. That is where the challenge is. I think our future and the community's future—especially the community back home—their future is dependent solely on whether we are able to make that shift.

Many respondents echoed this sentiment and pointed out that the failure of the LTTE rested on its inability to discern when the guns should go silent. While almost all of my respondents believed that the armed struggle was justified in the context in which it arose, many also expressed dismay that a new path more in line with changing geopolitical conditions was not forged before it was too late. As one Tamil man put it,

> The problem with the LTTE, and this is truly what I believe to be of all armed groups in Sri Lanka that went through this phase, is I think they failed to convert themselves to a different tactic as the times demanded it. They were a necessary force when they came into being, absolutely. They were a militant armed force and they had to happen the way they did happen. But I think they could've converted into the parliamentary process a lot more effectively, and if they had converted to that, they would've survived to this day. At a certain point in time when you find you've done everything you can militarily and you've gotten that leveraging power, I think what they did is they tried to go more and more aggressive. I think it was an act of too much aggressiveness. If they'd leveraged all of that aggressiveness to the political process . . . [pause] and because they failed to make that conversion is, I think, why they kind of defeated themselves in the end.

Just as some acknowledged failures on the part of the LTTE, others I talked to were highly defensive of the Tigers and refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing on their part. While this viewpoint is often presented as the majority viewpoint by critics of the Tamil diaspora, such as the Sri Lankan government, it was in fact expressed by only a few of my respondents—most others conveyed an appreciation, and perhaps a hunger, for diverse viewpoints about the role of the diaspora in Sri Lankan politics. One Tamil woman, for example, noted that while she has heard many rumors of what the LTTE did, she tries not to pay too much attention to them. "I guess I tried to ignore that because I don't like to

think of them as bad," she said. "If anyone says anything I am just very defensive about them." Another Tamil man, when asked about the crimes of the LTTE, responded that he supported them without reservations.

> No, I think it is all . . . I don't believe that at all. Propaganda purely. Why would they shoot their own people? No, there is no reason for them to shoot, I don't see why.
>
> **Interviewer:** *If you found out that they did, would it change your opinion of the Tigers?*
>
> No, because maybe at that point they probably did it for the right reasons. They would not randomly kill; they are fighting for the cause of these people and if they wanted to kill these people, there would have to be a very critical or vital reason for them to do it, otherwise they wouldn't do it. They are risking their lives; they are putting themselves through the struggle for these people, so if they are willing to kill their people it has to be an extremely good reason.
>
> **Interviewer:** *What about the charge that the LTTE used child soldiers?*
>
> There were talks about it but I don't think . . . I think they might have been trained or they might be . . . I don't think anyone is forced, or any child is forced to join the Tigers. It is a choice and most people just by seeing what is around them and all these unnecessary people dying, like their parents being raped or family members being raped, it forces them to go and get revenge, even at a very young age. So, it has been talked about, but I don't believe so, no.

Others argued that international criticism of the LTTE arose out of a persistent double standard. They pointed out that Western nations wage war and "kill people all the time"; that is how war is conducted. According to them, to single out the LTTE as a terrorist organization is inaccurate and deeply unfair. As one Tamil woman noted,

> There's that quote: one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter, right? So it just goes to show that it's just because of this public view that we're terrorists and there's these labels being thrown on Tamil people. . . . I've heard stories of how the Tamil Tigers forced families into doing this and families into doing that, or forced people to join the LTTE. But then again, what about conscription, in like World War II or whatever, when Canada forced boys over eighteen to join the Canadian Army? That wasn't wrong because it was a white man doing it—it was Canada doing it. Fine, but as soon as it's the Tamil Tigers, we're a terrorist organization, and as soon as we're recruiting people and forcing young men to join, then it's a problem.

When asked about his opinion of the LTTE and whether it had committed any crimes of its own, another Tamil man argued,

From what I've heard, the Tamil people that they killed were going against the cause or getting bought out by the Sri Lankan government. Say like Lakshman Kadirgamar [a Tamil and former minister of foreign affairs], right? He got murdered by the LTTE, but he ignored what the Sri Lankan government was doing to the Tamil people, and he justified the Sri Lankan government's military actions against the Tamil people. He justified everything only because he was getting that paycheck at the end of the day from the government and the government pension. So, I guess, those types of people who—like I really don't mind whatever happens to them. Because of their selfish reasons, they're ignoring what's happening to their own people.

Interviewer: *Do you think the LTTE attacked people who weren't involved at all?*

I'm pretty sure they did, because every organization has its bad people, right? Like look at Iraq. The American soldiers went to Iraq, and you see the things some of them did to the people. That's—every organization has its—I'm pretty sure the Tigers did it too.

Interviewer: *The killing of Sinhalese civilians by the Tigers, you're fine with that?*

I'm fine with that to a point. Like I don't want any innocent people to die, right? But if that's what it's going to take to save our innocent people—then I'm fine with that, I guess. It's so wrong to say, I know [*laughs*].

Such comments about "Western double standards" and hypocrisy also extended to conversations about the Canadian government's decision to proscribe the LTTE and its Canadian "front organization," the World Tamil Movement, as terrorist organizations in 2006 and 2008 respectively. Many of those I interviewed argued that a more nuanced, and perhaps fair, understanding of terrorism should include state terrorism as well. It is unjust, they argued, for the Canadian government as well as many other states around the world to proscribe the LTTE while continuing to uncritically work with the Sri Lankan government. One youth criticized Canada for simply "going along with" the United States in its decision to proscribe the LTTE and argued that Canada failed to fully understand the situation on the ground before making its decision. He told me, "I can understand if an individual goes, takes a look, understands the situation, then comes to me and tells me, 'This is why this organization is terrorist.' That's understandable, as opposed to you just saying, 'Oh yeah, Tigers, let's put them on the list,' do you know what I mean? Obviously, following America's decision is what Canada is good at. 'America has said they're terrorists. We'll call them terrorists too.' That's what it is. There are still how many countries in the world where the LTTE are not terrorists?"

Another youth, who was deeply critical of the LTTE throughout our interview, stated that he agreed with Canada's decision. However, he also argued that

Canada needs to take a more critical stance toward the Sri Lankan government and push them toward a just peace. As he pointed out, "I was happy, and sent a letter to Stockwell Day saying it is the right thing to do. He was the public safety minister at the time. I am a Tamil and I support this idea—it sends a message. At the same time I mentioned that, as the government, you need to pressure the Sri Lankan government to come to a political solution. There needs to be some kind of solution. Canada is in a good position to do that." It is evident, then, that Tamil youths' articulation of the LTTE's role in the history of the conflict on the island is not only diverse but sophisticated and showcases a deep wrestling with what the LTTE meant for the struggle and the powerful influence the organization had on the expression of Tamil identity, as well as many of the organization's missteps. Indeed, grappling with the legacy of the LTTE in formulating the future of Tamil politics, particularly in its diasporic framing, will likely continue for some time.

Velupillai Prabhakaran and Charismatic Leadership

In a particularly memorable news broadcast during the 2009 protests in Toronto, one Tamil man blankly told a reporter that Sri Lankan forces "cannot kill Prabhakaran." The Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran held a mythic stature for many in the Tamil diaspora, and judging by this man's tone, it was apparent that his belief had secular (he probably escaped unharmed) as well as religious (he is protected "from above") overtones. Indeed, Toronto police chief Bill Blair recalled that one of the things that he was most concerned about, and a question he repeatedly brought to Tamil community leaders during the 2009 demonstrations, was *how the diaspora would react* to the news of Prabhakaran's death, if and when it came. It was understandably a real concern during the summer of 2009, when LTTE flags and portraits of the late Prabhakaran lined the streets of Toronto and Ottawa for several months. Many Tamil youth whom I interviewed had mixed feelings about Prabhakaran. They could not help but admire him but also openly acknowledged his many weaknesses. One youth, in reflecting on Prabhakaran, resisted the temptation to deify the Tiger leader as a way of making sense of his flaws:

> He was a phenomenal figure, honestly. I think he was a figure that was needed because he was a product, I think, of the Tamil community. He was not this alien or this being who came by like a divine, immaculate being or something. He was a product of circumstances that the Tamils found themselves to be in and, in some instances, I

> think he proved himself a good cast on which people tried to mold their own opinions around him, in the sense that he had certain strengths. And I think he did it, but he also had his weaknesses. He was, in the end, a human being. Two things happened with the LTTE. One, people failed to realize that Prabhakaran was a human being, he had his weaknesses and so he could be wrong, he could make erroneous judgments. And two, the LTTE failed to convert themselves to the political processes in time. Those two things kind of destroyed the whole thing.

The Tamil community, this respondent felt, may have placed too much trust in Prabhakaran to "deliver" Tamil Eelam or at least a drastically different political framework in Sri Lanka. Prabhakaran's steadfast goal of achieving nothing short of Tamil Eelam often led him to make decisions that seemed impractical and naïve when seen against the backdrop of the evolving geopolitical landscape. Prabhakaran is said to have stated on several occasions that if he ever compromised on the goal of Tamil Eelam, any Tamil citizen had the right to kill him. Staking his honor, reputation, and right to leadership on such stubborn proclamations indeed aroused admiration from followers but left him with little room to pivot or maneuver politically. He himself had drawn a patriotic circle so tightly around the ends of his shoes that any accommodating step would have morphed him into the very kind of person he so consistently and brutally cleansed from the organization. Many of the youth I spoke to in Canada saw these kinds of contradictions fairly clearly, even while expressing admiration for Prabhakaran and what he was able to create in the LTTE. As one Tamil woman pointed out,

> Personally, I don't see him as that all-encompassing leader. He's almost a deity to some people. It's a little disturbing to me, that people would so completely believe in someone. It's dangerous because you don't really have that—even when Tamil Eelam existed as a de facto state—you don't really have that sense of openness, or sense of democracy. It functioned, and it functioned well. But that doesn't necessarily mean that people had rights. You agree, or you don't function within that group. That totalitarianism was disturbing to me, personally. I don't really know how I feel. I don't personally think I would see him as my leader, per se, but I think he was a necessary symbol of the conflict.

During the May 2009 demonstrations in Toronto, she had participated in protests during which chants like "Prabhakaran, Our Leader!" were routine. "I didn't say that chant," she told me. "That was one of those I chose not to say."

While most of those I interviewed expressed opinions about Prabhakaran that varied from seeing him as a necessary unifying figure to someone they

admired overall, even while acknowledging his many missteps, a fair number of those I talked to either refused to acknowledge Prabhakaran's and the LTTE's crimes or rationalized them away as imperfections that plague all leaders and organizations. Others saw him in mythic and even prophetic terms, erasing in their minds any remnant of his more notorious acts and decisions. One youth I interviewed in Toronto, representative of a small minority to be sure, argued that Prabhakaran likely had some prophetic abilities, as he was able to build the LTTE up from scratch and pick the right people to run the organization. As he told me,

> I think he's some sort of . . . I don't think he's a god but possibly some sort of prophet or something. He sort of sees or receives some sort of communication from someone. Or else how could he start just by himself and a pistol and make such a huge organization? Clearly he had a very deep vision of what he wanted and what he wanted to accomplish and he saw from today to twenty years down the road. He took it step by step and he planned it. It is a matter of having the right people too. . . . He had a special ability to pick and judge people.

Another person I interviewed, quite surprisingly, argued that Prabhakaran went out of his way to ensure that Tamil or Sinhalese civilians were spared—a statement that does not accurately reflect the history of the conflict. While others had argued that one of Prabhakaran's weaknesses was his brutal overdependence on militancy, this respondent suggested just the opposite: that Prabhakaran's weakness was indeed that his keen sense of morality did not allow him to be *more* ruthless. As he told me,

> I think Prabhakaran is an amazing person. I think there's one thing that I'm very concerned about—it's that he would just . . . sometimes I would say that he was very, very, very, very nice. And, you know, even though I could say that that's a bad thing about him, but that's the strongest thing about him too, right? Like, so for example, he was a person who wouldn't even attack civilians or anyone, right? He would only attack the people that have directly attacked him, or the Tamil civilians. So, for example, like during the Anuradhapura attack, he told the soldiers specifically under his command do not . . . make sure that none of the children of any of the Sri Lankan Army officers get injured in this attack, because right now is vacation time for these kids, and they might be wandering around these military bases too. And he made sure that none of those kids got injured. And that's how much of a nice person he was. That even during an attack he tried to make sure that no kids got scratched. And I think that in itself is very inspiring, you know, for a military leader to care about even the smallest thing.

What is clear again in sentiments like these is that while criticism of some of the LTTE's conduct throughout the war, and particularly in the final months, is beginning to be articulated in the diaspora, the character and personality of Prabhakaran remains, for the most part, off limits. I encountered much of the same kind of argumentation in my later research in Sri Lanka itself, during which various decisions made by the LTTE in the final months of the war, for which the group was heavily criticized, would quite regularly be blamed on dissolute commanders rather than Prabhakaran himself. While some of these arguments may indeed be accurate, the tone in which this defense was often expressed—"he would never have ordered something like that"—indicated a deep faith in Prabhakaran's character and moral fortitude.

Similarly, another respondent expressed his admiration for Prabhakaran as someone who fought for what he believed in for over three decades. He argued that even as the diaspora organizes protests and other forms of resistance, they cannot really know what it is like to wage an isolated campaign for so long, to subject your family to a life of risk, and to die fighting with the last of your cadres on the battlefield. As he noted,

> Would you stand alone when the entire world is coming after you? Just for the fact that you're standing up for what you believe in, that you're standing up for your people? Especially as a community, we are a hard community to understand or get along with. For one man to be the leadership for the entire community around the world, that's a big thing. Yeah, some people may say whatever, "He's a dictator. He's this. He's that." But would you put away your childhood, and pretty much your adulthood, to go through this process, to train, to become what you are, to get married, and then have your kids lose their childhood, for your people? Would you do that? No other person in this world, even if they tell me that they can do it, can do it. Not only that. These are kids; these are people that you grew up with. To him, he's like the father figure for all these kids, his children who are giving up their lives for their people, for our people. Even now, this is what pisses me off so much about the Tamil community—those people that are in the camps right now in Vanni or anywhere else, most of them, they give their sons and daughters for *our* freedom. Is it not up to us to fight for those people back home right now? They gave up their kids for our freedom. Those kids gave up their livelihood for us and we're sitting home or going clubbing or drinking. That's our livelihood? Come on!

Another respondent similarly noted that the Tamil community must have been blessed to have such a dedicated, caring, and compassionate leader as Prabhakaran. As she explained,

> I think he's one of the greatest leaders. I think he has done a lot for the Tamil people and I think to have such a leader like that, we must've been somewhat blessed as a community because he is really a selfless man. He is not a prideful person, he's not a big talker, and he's not a politician. He's not even a military person, he's more philosophical too, if you actually get to talk to him. Like, you read about him, a lot of people would say he's a bit of everything combined, and I think that's what has made him a great leader. He's very caring, very compassionate, and people forget to see that. He was so keen on always making sure that civilians don't die. It wouldn't have taken him long to bomb a lot of their places back but he never did that. He was a man who saw things in a different realm, and you can say that maybe *that's* what caused us . . . if he was like a Hitler-type of person then, you know, he would have been able to destroy much more or he would have been able to take over Sri Lanka much faster maybe, right?

While it is of course inaccurate to describe the diaspora as homogenously pro-Tiger, considering the often multifaceted ways in which the Tamil community relates to the LTTE as well as Prabhakaran, it was clear that many Tamil youth in the diaspora entertained an extraordinarily distorted picture of Tamil militancy and a scattered understanding of the conflict in general. For example, many knew little about the LTTE's treatment of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka or believed all sorts of improbable things about the Sri Lankan government or the Sinhalese people in general. Some continue to believe that Prabhakaran is alive. The persistence of such a belief points to the role of rumor in the construction of individual identity within Tamil diaspora activism (Fine and Ellis 2010; Fine, Campion-Vincent, and Heath 2005; Turner 1993; Turner and Killian 1972). In the case of the rumors over Prabhakaran's death, many commentators and journalists working on Sri Lankan politics have predictably dismissed the persistence of these beliefs as "idiotic." Journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj, as well as KP, the former head of the international LTTE structure, suggest that the persistence of the rumor can be explained by the Nediyavan faction's insistence on keeping up the "ruse" that Prabhakaran is alive in order to continue to collect funds from the diaspora. As KP told Jeyaraj in their widely read 2010 interview,

> Everything is money now. When I issued a statement about Prabhakaran being dead they [the Nediyavan faction] started opposing it saying the leader was alive. When I planned to pay homage to Prabhakaran and other senior leaders they blocked it. Earlier I thought they were genuine in this belief about Prabhakaran being alive but later I discovered that they knew the truth but were pretending. You see, after some time I began negotiating with Nediyavan in a bid to patch up our differences and

> establish unity. One of the matters I was firm about was that we should acknowledge Prabakharan's [*sic*] death and conduct a week of mourning. Then Nediyavan said that we should never acknowledge Prabakharan's death publicly because the movement would not be able to collect money from the diaspora after that (Jeyaraj 2010b).

Individuals in the so-called Nediyavan faction just as vehemently accuse the "KP faction" of spreading rumors of its own. While the persistence of rumors around Prabhakaran's death appears to serve as a commentary about the ineffectiveness of Tamil diaspora organizations in Canada in fulfilling the need for charismatic leadership in a post-LTTE environment, some broader questions emerge: whether the persistence of these rumors serves a function for the diaspora community and whether the nature of these rumors can be seen as commentary on the level of trust individuals have in the Sri Lankan government and media organizations.

The persistence of such rumors is not so much a reflection of individuals refusing to face facts but rather an indication that they refused to *trust* the institutions delivering those facts, whether it be the Sri Lankan government or media organizations (DiFonzo and Bordia 2007). Deeply skeptical about the information put forth by the Sri Lankan government, some I spoke to did not trust the pictures, the videos, or the official statement released by the Rajapaksa government. "If someone other than the Sri Lankan government came to me and showed me proof he's dead, of course I'd believe it," one Tamil woman told me. "We're human, we die. But I'm not going to believe just some phony video or some phony pictures and be like 'Yeah he's dead.'" Similarly, another Tamil woman remarking on the pictures and videos that were released following Prabhakaran's death noted, "I think they are fakes. The Sri Lankan Army does anything and everything so if it *was* real, why wouldn't they take his DNA? Why would they go cremate his body? They wouldn't do that. That is the stupidest thing I have ever heard. Just for normal soldiers, they put them for show in the city and drag them around and for Prabhakaran you are going to do the rituals and cremate his body? [*Laughs*]. They wouldn't do that."

Indeed, far from being averse to facts, individuals often delivered a mind-numbing array of discrepancies or holes they found in the "official version" of Prabhakaran's death. When I first began hearing about the "holes" in the official story, I got to work investigating charges put forth by my respondents with the assumption that I would systematically "answer" them in this book. I soon came to realize that I was simply incapable of keeping up. Indeed, when faced with an avalanche, the most productive course of action is to get out of the way and understand the cause of it, rather than to try and wade one's way through

the snow. As Jonathan Kay (2011, 15) has written in his study of the 9/11 Truth Movement, once a conspiracy narrative had begun, "I would usually just put down my pen and listen as we dove together down the rabbit hole. There's nothing else to be done: These metanarratives are so elaborate and ambitious that they essentially describe alternate moral universes—unrecognizable realms in which a Western government smashing airplanes into its own cities makes perfect sense." While the "Prabhakaran is alive" narratives are certainly not as elaborate or all-encompassing as those concerning the 9/11 Truth Movement or recent conspiracies surrounding President Barack Obama (Amarasingam 2011), I at times found myself at local coffee shops in Toronto, tape recorder running, journeying with my respondents as they meticulously discussed satellite images, statements made by the LTTE, and reasons why certain photographs of Prabhakaran were forgeries. Respondents would argue that Prabhakaran was *known* to have this or that marking on his face or body and that the body shown to the world after his death did not contain these markings. Others also argued that the fact that the Sri Lankan government cremated his body so soon after his death was another red flag. As one respondent passionately pointed out, "And for the government of Sri Lanka to burn him right away? Hell no! Hell no! They would've hung him up in Colombo! You know what I mean? Let Sinhalese people come and see his body. They would have done that. They don't really care about the international community, bro. They would have made sure that happened. They would have embarrassed the Tamil people as much as they could. They didn't. They moved very quickly."

Social psychologists as well as scholars of folklore have paid much attention to rumor and legend as forms of oral discourse that may reveal much about social and political anxieties and uneasiness (Allport and Postman 1947). Social movement scholars, however, have paid relatively less attention to the role of rumors, even though they are often an important element of overall framing processes in relation to the out-group. As Samper (2002, 2) points out, "Although the study of rumors, gossip, and contemporary legends recently has been prolific in the popular press and in academic circles, the role of rumor in resistance—in signaling when ideology is questioned and rejected—and in social movements has been underdeveloped." Understanding rumor in social movements has the potential to reveal much about the contours of a group's beliefs and anxieties that will inevitably color their framing tactics. Rumor must not be confused with more *active* forms of message communication such as framing or propaganda strategies. Rather, beliefs in certain rumors, even if these beliefs are a result of the propaganda efforts of others, are held as accurate interpretations of a given event.

Rumor, generally defined, refers to "an unverified account or explanation of events, circulating from person to person and pertaining to an object, event, or issue of public concern" (Peterson and Gist 1951, 159). Warren Peterson and Noel Gist (1951, 159) point out in their study of rumors that spontaneously arise following a particular event, like the killing of Prabhakaran, that they are often the product of "collective efforts to interpret a problematic situation" and they form when "the public views the situation affectively and when authoritative information is lacking." These kinds of rumors arise when authoritative information is not trusted (even when it is *not* lacking) and, of particular relevance to the death of Prabhakaran, when contradictory information is released in the immediate aftermath of the event. As Tamotsu Shibutani (1966, 56–58) has noted in his sociological study of rumors, the "greater the unsatisfied demand for news, the more likely the rumors will develop." Contradictory information, especially if delivered by individuals who are not trusted or are viewed as traitorous by some members of the community, tills the field in which rumors can plant roots. This is what G. W. Allport and L. Postman (1947, 100) have called the process of assimilation, or the "powerful attractive force exerted upon rumor by the intellectual and emotional context existing in the listener's mind." Similarly, as Prashant Bordia and Nicholas DiFonzo (2004, 34) have pointed out, "Rumors as explanations provide meaning to the uncertain situation, and offer a sense of control."

To describe the last months of the civil war in Sri Lanka as an "uncertain situation" is indeed an understatement. To this day, new information is still being unearthed and historical and demographic uncertainties are still being corrected. A few months after the end of the conflict, the journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj wrote a profoundly detailed account of the last days of Prabhakaran, which, save for a few details, will likely remain among the various authoritative accounts destined to be written in the years to come. A key point he makes, which I would later find rehashed repeatedly during my conversations with Tamil youth, is that there was initially some confusion about what exactly happened. As he writes,

> It was anticipated on Saturday May 16th itself when the military intelligence received information that Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman had either been killed in shelling or taken their own lives. Both going "silent" during the weekend increased this suspicion. There had also been speculation that the Army had killed Prabhakaran and other top Tigers by Saturday May 16th itself. It was said that news of the killing was being withheld for President Rajapakse to return from Jordan and make the announcement himself. But Rajapakse, who returned on Sunday (May 17th) addressed

> the nation on Tuesday (May 19th) and as expected [on] Wednesday (May 20th) a national holiday. Interestingly when President Rajapakse delivered his address the death of Prabhakaran had not been confirmed and so there was no reference to it. It was after the address that the news was confirmed. Then on Monday May 18th there was news about three persons trying to get away in an ambulance. The vehicle was destroyed by the army and the charred body of one person was supposedly that of Prabhakaran's. Sections of the media went to town with the news that Prabhakaran's body had been found. But that was wrong and it was only the next morning that the body was discovered. But news had been published already that it had been found. The subsequent discovery of his body on Tuesday does not take away the fact that the earlier news was wrong. On Tuesday former eastern LTTE leader "Col" Karuna and ex-Tiger spokesperson Daya master identified the body. Some journalists and army officers also confirmed it. But KP created confusion by claiming that Prabhakaran was safe and alive. Presumably KP was relying on his earlier information that the Tiger leader had broken through. This fuelled much controversy about the death (Jeyaraj 2009a).

What fuels the controversy for many of the youth I spoke with is the front-line roles played by Karuna and KP in confirming the death of Prabhakaran. Karuna had defected from the LTTE in 2004 and joined the Sri Lankan government. Similarly, KP was arrested in August 2010 and is now seen to be cooperating with the Rajapaksa government. From the government's perspective, Karuna was likely in the best position to confirm the death of Prabhakaran, as he was one of the only people in the government who had met Prabhakaran in the fairly recent past. However, for some members of the diaspora this was a clear signal that they were being sold a bill of goods. Perspectives on whether Prabhakaran is alive or dead ranged from individuals believing he was waiting for an opportune time to reignite the conflict to those contending that he had given the movement over to the diaspora. For example, according to one Tamil man in Toronto, Prabhakaran is alive but has basically retired the military arm of the movement. As he noted,

> No, I don't think he's dead. He's somewhere. 100 percent. But I think he himself realized . . . the end result is what everybody cares about, including himself, and I believe he probably even realized that, you know what, war is not going to get [Tamil Eelam] . . . we've been fighting for how long? People are dying. Ninety percent of the time it's Tamil people that are dying, so what's the point? So he probably realized that, we have enough people outside of Sri Lanka now, all around the world and everything. Now it's about time that we take it to the next level, where it doesn't involve guns and doesn't involve soldiers, no dying. Now it's on a political level, and I think

> it can happen that way now because a lot of our Tamil people are in other countries and are able to get into the politics side of things. People I know that are in the Liberal Party or Conservative Party—Tamil people are in there. It's just a matter of time before they move up and up and we're able to influence people in that way.

Like many others I spoke with, he had a difficult time squaring what actually happened in May 2009 with Prabhakaran's many statements about what would happen with the movement, how fellow cadres were supposed to evade capture, and what he had told his cadres about how they should dispose of his body in the event of his death. As Michael Shermer and others have argued, the cognitive dissonance this respondent likely experienced because of such events caused him to seek to balance the size of the event with the size of the cause (Shermer 2011). With the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, conspiracy theorists ask, for example, how a "single nut with a gun" could kill someone as important as the president. Similarly, 9/11 Truthers wonder how nineteen men with box cutters could bring about the events of September 11, 2001. When great individuals are killed, we require great stories about how it happened. Similarly, with the death of Prabhakaran, many respondents stated repeatedly that "he was not stupid enough" to allow himself to be in a situation where he could be killed. One particular individual argued not only that Prabhakaran is alive but that he is waiting to see what the diaspora is able to accomplish and may reignite the conflict if the opportunity arises. As he pointed out, "He's going to wait it out while basically the world, us, we do stuff in our way now with the pen, the paper, and politically trying to get others to understand what the hell is going on. Now the war's over. Now people can't say 'terrorist.' People can't say, 'I don't want to listen to you because you're a terrorist.' Now, I'm a citizen of Canada. I have something to say. I need you to look at this, so look at it, you know what I mean?" Other respondents argued that regardless of whether Prabhakaran is dead or alive, his vision still lives on and must be taken forward by the diaspora communities. As one respondent noted, "I think, from the standpoint of the Sri Lankan government, and I don't mean to say this in an offensive way . . . I think one of the best things that they could have done from their standpoint is kill Prabhakaran. . . . I think that will encourage other young leaders to take up what he believed in and what he stood for and I think it will just have a multiplying effect on young Tamils." Among those who did not accept the rumor surrounding the circumstances of Prabhakaran's death, there were some who urged the Tamil diaspora to move beyond the LTTE and engage in productive activities for the good of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. As one Tamil woman argued,

> I don't think he is alive, and I think it's time people moved on from, like, even thinking about that. I understand he's important for the morale of the struggle, but a lot of people have lost their lives in the struggle, not only him, so it's important that people move on and just see what they can do, instead of mourning. I mean, it's important to mourn for those who have passed away and in that sense, you'd take him just like any other *maveerar* [great hero], but you shouldn't get trapped into thinking, "Oh my God, we lost our leader," you should be, "This didn't work out, what's next?"

The significance of Prabhakaran for the lives of many Tamils in the diaspora and for the movement in general moved beyond a question of whether in fact he is dead or alive. Some of those I spoke to at times could not even *say aloud* that he is dead—they simply did not know how to process it. In a sense, acknowledging Prabhakaran's death would imply that the diaspora had enough momentum, organizational strength, and political clout to *match* the LTTE in the game of Tamil nationalism. As many felt this was not the case, their responses often stumbled into a quaint game of refusing to answer. In one memorable interview with a Tamil man, he insisted that the question of whether or not Prabhakaran is alive is "complicated" and is "a waste of time" to discuss because "the most important part is to first of all, you know, protect and advocate for the people that he believed in and that you believe in." At one point in the interview he told me that he never could have a direct answer to that question but added that "he's done his part and now deserves a rest no matter where he is, if he's dead or alive." The notion that it wasn't important whether he is dead or alive brought up the question of whether Prabhakaran is more than human. In response, the man I was speaking to once again stumbled through an answer:

> I think . . . the thing is, I wouldn't say he's more than human, but he is the most . . . like he . . . like it's more of a . . . he's achieved the most out of, you know, being a human, I guess. So I mean . . . he's kind of like more than human to me, right? Really, because the thing is that even though he's not around me or I don't associate with him like on a direct basis, I think whatever I do in my life is kind of surrounded by his principles, and the founding principles of the organization, right? And not only him, but the soldiers.

He also insisted that his inability to provide an answer to the question was not a result of the issue being too emotional for him, but, as he told me, "It's just I . . . like I don't know and I don't really care, right? I think it's just that, you know, if you believe in him—live for what he fought for, and continue with that, and stop crying about it."

Many Tamil youth I spoke to had a kind of guarded admiration for the LTTE

and Prabhakaran but seemed to recognize the drawbacks of an armed struggle as well as the limitations that such movements bring with them in terms what can ultimately be accomplished. But how were they conceiving the role of the diaspora going forward—as well as their commitment to separatism? There seems to be very little uniformity when it comes to such questions. Viewpoints ranged from humanitarian work and political lobbying to pushing for war crimes investigations and human rights.

Reflecting on the Future: The Importance of Tamil Eelam?

Diasporic identity is complex, and it is perhaps better understood as a process than through necessarily limiting definitions. In his study of the Jewish diaspora, Gabriel Sheffer (2002, 335) argues that diasporic identity is anchored in "the idea of a common ancestry, biological connections maintained through endogamy (until recently), a historical language, collective historical memories, a discernible degree of national solidarity, a deeply rooted connection to the ancient homeland (but not necessarily to present-day Israel), and shared patterns of collective behavior." Many of these anchors are also articulated by Tamil youth in Canada in relation to the postwar transition in Sri Lanka. But when it comes to politics in Sri Lanka, specifically surrounding the struggle around the creation of Tamil Eelam, diasporic identity among Tamils is very diverse. While many respondents agreed with the *symbolic* significance of Tamil Eelam as a construct, there was no uniform opinion with respect to whether Tamil Eelam needed to exist as a separate state. As one respondent noted, for example, the North and East of Sri Lanka is the historical homeland of the Tamil people and it "exists" regardless of whether it is internationally recognized. When people ask him about Tamil Eelam, he says he tells them about the history, how with the arrival of the British came the unification of Sri Lanka, but, as he told me, "[that] homeland is not about being on a piece of paper. It's integrated into our lives, right? It's integrated into our history." Tamil Eelam, he insisted, was created by the more than thirty thousand Tamil soldiers who fought in the war.

Many of my respondents, when asked whether the creation of Tamil Eelam as a separate state was important to them, evinced a kind of disillusionment with conflict and war. While they somewhat expressed a support for a separate state, they also, keeping in mind the history of protracted civil war, recognized that peace may now be more important for the people in Sri Lanka. Similarly, many others argued that if a position of equality and dignity could be achieved for minority populations in Sri Lanka, then a separate state, as such, is largely

irrelevant. One Tamil woman I spoke to questioned what happens when Tamil Eelam is achieved or what Tamil Eelam stands for. Instead, she argued,

> Tamil Eelam is not important to me. Peace is more important to me. Tamil Eelam is good and all, but I don't think people look at the bigger picture of who's going to run this Tamil Eelam. How are we getting money for Tamil Eelam? The whole bigger picture. I just wanted the war to stop. . . . I understand that we want equality, we want rights. We want fairness and all of that. I just wanted the war to stop, the fighting to stop, I just wanted the killing to stop. . . . If they want Tamil Eelam for peace, okay, I support it. Whatever it takes to get peace. Just stop innocent people dying. But do I need Tamil Eelam for that? I don't need it. But if people say this is what needs to happen in order to get peace, I don't know.

A Tamil man similarly argued that it was not so much about a separate state as it was about Tamil people having some say over how their lives are governed. Tamil Eelam, for him, symbolized such representation, fair treatment, and progress. "My view," he told me, "is that we're stuck in that idea that it has to be one way or the other, like it is black or white, like you give it to us or we give you unrest, right?" Instead, he pointed out, "You don't want Tamil Eelam for the sake of having Tamil Eelam—you want all the things that it gives you, right? You want the power to govern, you want the claim over the land, you want the ability to educate your people and build infrastructure—you need to make them grow and be healthy. You can have those things by giving up that ownership that you're looking for."

Achieving equality for Tamils in Sri Lanka is of course necessary, some of those I interviewed insisted, but is only one part of the story. The other, more significant aspect of the story deals with how the diaspora community can contribute to the fight for self-determination of the Tamil people. When asked how important the creation of Tamil Eelam was for him, one Tamil man felt compelled to rephrase the question for himself, asking instead, "How important is the right to self-determination for Tamil people?" What lies beneath his rephrasing is a prioritization of the political rights of Tamils. He went on to explain that

> if the Sri Lankan government is able to and Sinhala people are able to recognize that Tamil people have the right to self-determination, then I am fine to live in a unitary state, but if the Tamil community in the North and East decides that they want to exercise the right to self-determination and become a separate state, I will also recognize that and I will respect that too. . . . But, as a *community*, we need our political rights. That will be the only thing that will give us, as a community, the

TABLE 8. Tamil youths' ($N = 69$) beliefs about the importance of the creation of Tamil Eelam (percentages)

Very important	43	Somewhat unimportant	20
Somewhat important	28	Completely unimportant	9

> long-term sustainability that we will need if we are to continue to exist as Tamils in Sri Lanka. So that is why I am saying that political rights, or especially the right to self-determination, are important because that will recognize that Tamil people's homeland is the North and East, and they have a unique language, culture, and that they have a right to practice it.

While only a small number of individuals I spoke to held this position at the time, recent events in the diaspora have brought these kinds of arguments to the forefront. There has been a concerted effort by some organizations in the diaspora, particularly the National Council of Canadian Tamils and the Tamil Youth Organization in Canada, to reframe the conversation in the diaspora community from one of reconciliation to one of sovereignty. These organizations and their representatives accuse many in the Tamil community of providing "cover" for the Sri Lankan government's refusal to acknowledge that human rights violations and war crimes were committed in the final months of the war by pushing the language of reconciliation and "moving on." Many I interviewed could sympathize with these criticisms, but they also expressed a need to open up the parameters of activism and mobilization that are available to the diaspora going forward.

The end of the war in May 2009 was of enormous significance for many Tamil youth in Canada: the months-long protests came to a close, Tamil identity for many was reshaped, and the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka came to the forefront of their daily activities. One Tamil man, who quit his job and slept in his car for days during the protests in Ottawa, noted that much of what he does now is consumed with the Tamil cause. Every decision he makes and what he considers to be possibilities for the future, he says, are all influenced by his commitment to the preservation of Tamil identity and Tamil culture, including his decision about whether to enter academia. Instead, he has chosen to work for a Tamil arts organization. Speaking of older generations, the sacrifices they have made, and how that led him to where he is now, he told me,

> They've left their family, they've left their way of life, they've left their language, they've basically—yeah, it's the land of freedom and free will and everything like that, but you know what? For them it's not. For them it's a struggle, a daily struggle—they

> are working two to three jobs . . . So their culture, their community, their way of life shouldn't cease to exist after they are not there. And it's important to me to continue that and I think it's important for my children and my friends to also know about that. So the arts organization that we started right now is just for that. It's to ensure that university students, youth, are involved in continually sustaining the Tamil heritage, culture, arts. Whether it be dance, art, visual arts, film, however they can communicate the message, they should be utilizing it.

Similarly, a Tamil woman I spoke to noted that her decision to pursue medicine is shaped and driven by her desire to help people in Sri Lanka. "Ultimately the things that I work for, the success, whatever it is, that I'm able to achieve in my life, a huge part of that would go back, it would contribute back to the individuals in whatever form that I can," she explained. "So if I, when I was a really young kid, the first thing, if anyone ever asked me, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?,' I'd always say, 'Doctor.' And the reason that I said that was because I always wanted to take those skills and go back to help people in Sri Lanka."

Particularly in the post-LTTE period, as the diaspora activism in the early months of 2009 has shown, many in the Tamil diaspora see themselves as having an increased voice in relation to the plight of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. This increased involvement ranged from a heightened sense of civic responsibility to one centered on figuring out ways to more effectively lobby politicians in Canada as well as in the international arena. One Tamil man articulated his vision of how the movement would develop in terms of both educating the broader public but also moving to a more "political strategy," as he put it, in which "we can say, all right, we want to set up these programs, we want the same goals for everyone in this country and can we attain them by other means—NGOs or out of the Sri Lanka organizations that go there, invest time and money into helping the people lead better lives."

For individuals like these, it is not enough to be "armchair activists" in Canada. Rather, a big part of what the Tamil diaspora can do is to put their education, financial well-being, and skills to good use on the ground. Others argue that, even if living and working in Sri Lanka is not feasible, it is necessary to get a sense of what the people in Sri Lanka actually want from the diaspora communities who "presume to speak for them." Many argued that any solution should come from Tamils in Sri Lanka itself, with diaspora Tamils providing a strong supporting role. "I think we have to really have an understanding of how the Tamil people there feel, right?" one Tamil man argued. "For one, like, a lot of us are imposing our views on them and telling the people there how things

should be or trying to, like, just reiterate the past, but we're not feeling the same pain that the people there are going through." Instead, he insisted, "we all need to get a feel for what they want and then from here, like working with NGOs or politicians, try to reflect that view and propagate that. I think that's fine. But I don't think the solution should come from outside in."

Even now, after the more intense period of protest and mobilization of January to May 2009 had passed, one Tamil woman argued that it is important to stay civically engaged, going so far as to define the role of the diaspora in these terms. "I think the job of the diaspora is to remain active, to remain engaged," she told me, "but I think the job of the diaspora is really to realize that they can't be complacent in their home country, in the country where they are now, that in order for their voice to be heard, they have to be active members." She continued, "They can't just pick and choose topics that they like, they have to be active members throughout their lives, just as they would be if they were at home, and I think a lot of the older generation of diaspora communities are scared, because of language barriers, to be active. And I think that's really important for them, to be active in their community so that when there are issues that hit home for them, there are people that will be listening to them."

For many others I spoke with, the primary goal of the diaspora community around the world is to lobby politically on behalf of the Tamil struggle. Alongside humanitarian concerns should be the quest for devolution of powers, postwar demilitarization of the North and East, justice, and accountability. "The future is actually more political than military," one woman I spoke to insisted. While Sri Lanka is flaunting its victory over the LTTE, she argued that it may lose the peace in the long run. As such, she stated, "I really do think the power is now with the diaspora, rallying and lobbying the organizations, government ministers, and just taking it one step at a time. . . . I think thirty years was a really long time for this military struggle, but I think it might take another thirty years to convince the world that there needs to be a Tamil Eelam. I don't think the diaspora themselves can create Tamil Eelam. I think they have to lobby the international community to push for Tamil Eelam."

The Tamil diaspora, particularly Tamil youth in Canada, are not the homogenous and pro-Tiger bloc they are often thought to be. Characterized by a diverse set of viewpoints in relation to the LTTE, Prabhakaran, and Tamil nationalism, they continue to wrestle with their role in homeland affairs. No one with whom I spoke, young or old, believed that the diaspora could move mountains. But even many years after the end of the military conflict in May 2009, reflections on the past and its legacy and articulations about the future course of Tamil politics, in the diaspora and on the island, continue unabated.

CONCLUSION

On January 10, 2012, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, President Mahinda Rajapaksa's brother and the secretary of the Defence and Urban Development Ministry, delivered a lecture to the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute and Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited. The president's brother, arguably the second most powerful man in Sri Lanka, began his lecture by stating that Sri Lanka still faces "several threats" following the end of protracted civil war. The very first threat he mentioned, and which he discussed at length, was the "reorganization of the LTTE in the international arena" (Rajapaksa 2012). Mentioning several Tamil diaspora groups, including the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam directly, he argued that even after the defeat of the LTTE, "the rump of the LTTE's global establishment is still active." Rajapaksa argued, for example, that the "unwavering intent" of LTTE-linked groups overseas "is the division of Sri Lanka and the establishment of a separate state." He went on to note, "Most of them say they engage only in political activism and not violence. Almost all of them pretend to have a democratic face. But make no mistake. The Tiger has not changed its stripes" (Rajapaksa 2012).

While the defense secretary's remarks do not necessarily reflect in essence the views of mainstream Sri Lankans or the broader international community, it is true that with the end of the war in Sri Lanka, many have expressed uneasiness and uncertainty with respect to the activities of the Tamil diaspora around the world. Indeed, such a stark verdict on diaspora activism by someone as powerful as the president's brother and defense minister is worrisome, to say the least. To make matters worse, in April 2014 the government of Sri Lanka proscribed as "terrorist fronts" sixteen organizations and released the names of more than four hundred individuals who were banned from entering the country (Jeyaraj 2014). The timing of the proscription, occurring concurrently with the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, signaled to many that the government decision was, as Human Rights Watch (2014) stated, "aimed at restricting peaceful activism by the country's Tamil minority" against the government. Many things were worrisome about this decision: it made it difficult for Tamil political parties on the island to receive support and funding from abroad, it made it impossible for many diaspora activists associated with these banned organizations to ever again visit family and friends in the country, and it made it quite dangerous for NGO groups and aid workers to

receive support, financially or otherwise, from diaspora organizations that have a vested interest in the country (Human Rights Watch 2014). As this book went to press, many diaspora organizational leaders did note that the proscription has had a "chilling effect" on how activists and politicians in Sri Lanka interact with them. The Canadian government, to its credit, scoffed at the ban (Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada 2014). The full ripple effect of these decisions by the Sri Lankan government remains to be seen, but it is clear that the government is increasingly worried about, and not shy about targeting, diaspora activists and organizations.

While the Canadian government did not support Sri Lanka's recent ban on diaspora organizations, Canadian officials have not always been comfortable with the Tamil diaspora's activities, and they also were not entirely certain about what the end of the war in Sri Lanka would mean for "their" Tamils in Canada. I have attempted to show in this book, however, with a more systematic and in-depth examination of Tamil diaspora politics that uncovers much about the nature and character of the post-LTTE transition, that many of these concerns are overblown. I examined, first, the history of the development of Tamil grievances in Sri Lanka, as well as of the armed conflict, in order to understand the context out of which the diaspora was born. In the Canadian context, I argue, the shifts in immigration and refugee policy from the 1960s to the 1980s, while certainly not put into place with the Tamil community in mind, nevertheless facilitated their arrival in Canada. As the Tamil community in Canada grew, so too did lobby groups and service-oriented organizations, and their significance in cementing the politics of the diaspora transnationally cannot be denied.

The demonstrations that took place in Canada from December 2008 to May 2009—the final months of the war in Sri Lanka—became the most visible evidence of Tamil diasporic politics. The protests repeatedly made headlines in the Canadian media, and while there were all kinds of discussions about the diaspora and its support for terrorism, largely due to the continued exhibition of the LTTE flag and other symbols at demonstrations, it was clear that there was more going on. For one, while Tamil activists were desperate to get the attention of the international community, as well as Canadian officials, there were larger structural and intracommunal dynamics at play that hampered much of this effort. As I note at length, the framing strategies employed as well as the mobilizing networks that organized many of the demonstrations were at times precisely those dynamics that led to the "closing" of opportunities. In other words, the strategic and symbolic choices made by a social movement in order to gain support among its *own* community gave rise to constraints in the political context. The presence of and debate about the LTTE flag was perhaps the best example of

how such relations played out. However, as I argue, the demonstrations should be remembered less for what they accomplished and more for the emotional and individual significance they had for participants themselves.

Future studies of diaspora politics, then, in addition to examining transnational ties, can benefit by looking closely at intracommunity debates and their interactions with mainstream society. Such interplay is often just as important as transnational ties for understanding how the diaspora conceives of itself and its relationship to homeland conflict. The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) is one such example of an intracommunity organization. While the TGTE maintains separatism as a prime goal, it approaches this objective from a purposefully nonmilitant standpoint. The organization openly frames itself as a postmilitary, transnational lobby group, dedicated to fighting for the right of self-determination for the Tamil people. However, the group, as of this writing, has stalled in gaining widespread support from the diaspora community, particularly the youth. There are several reasons for this. For one, many youth argue that, having grown up and received a university education in a "Western" context, they are in a better position to lobby and engage in transnational activism than some in the older generation. For another, while many Tamil youth do believe that the diaspora has a role to play in postwar Sri Lanka, they are not entirely convinced that such a role should take the form of groups like the TGTE, which is still working within a separatist framework and struggling with the LTTE's legacy.

Tamil youth identity in the diaspora as it relates to diaspora politics following the war is equally tied up in complex interactions with the host countries and Sri Lanka. While most commentators acknowledge that there is no such thing as *the* Tamil diaspora—identifying the diversity that exists in the community—such recognition usually does not go far enough. In other words, acknowledging this diversity has often been confined to dividing the community into, on the one hand, a "moderate majority" and, on the other hand, a "pro-Tiger" bloc. In the postwar period, such divisions are largely meaningless. When asked questions about their views on Prabhakaran, Tamil Eelam, and the LTTE, as well as the future role of the diaspora in Sri Lanka, Tamil youth expressed wide-ranging opinions. While many youth appreciate the diversity of opinions that has prevailed after May 2009 and believe that it will only strengthen the diaspora's ability to tackle problems affecting the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, others in the community, including many in postwar Tamil organizations, lament that what seems like diversity is, in fact, the diaspora's continued inability to present itself as a unified bloc in order to adequately address issues on the island. These conversations will likely continue for some time, but

the persistence of this debate is itself a noteworthy, and perhaps even unique, characteristic of postwar diaspora politics. These changing notions of diaspora involvement in the politics of Sri Lanka have only heightened in breadth and intensity in the past few years. It is clear that the commitment of the Tamil diaspora to continue the push for war crimes investigations, postwar demilitarization, and devolution of powers or self-determination continues unabated. A significant element of much of this activism is a need to peg the Tamil fight for equitable treatment in Sri Lanka to broader mainstream concerns.

In February 2011, for instance, I was invited to speak at the Tamil Rights Week event organized by students at the University of Waterloo. Having attended a few of these events during my field research, I poured some coffee and made myself comfortable, assuming that I would not be called on to speak for some time. However, this particular event did not contain as much pageantry as I had expected. There was, to be sure, a mixture of poetry, dance, and songs before the talks began. I spoke for twenty minutes about some of the postwar challenges experienced by ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka before departing. Many of the events I had attended in the course of my research were often overtly nationalistic, and at times openly supportive of the LTTE. However, the tone of this event, like many I have been to since, was full of the language of human rights, and the event was consumed with tying the plight of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka with the plight of all other "mainstream" human rights abuses and genocides (Rwanda, Darfur, the Holocaust, and so on). The argument was more clearly made that while the Tamils are suffering "without witness," their struggle is in fact no different than others that have captured the world's attention.

There is, of course, nothing novel about such a formulation. Social movements are always involved in practices that attempt to relate their particular cause to mainstream concerns. As some single-issue social movements find it difficult to attract broad support, these kinds of initiatives are fundamentally important for movement survival and the building of support. While mainstream society may value minority concerns, human rights, or the rule of law, the success or failure of a particular social movement depends on how well participants link their demands to these broader social values. While Tamil diaspora activism has at times been successful in this regard, there have also been many missteps. Many have argued, and it seems that the Sri Lankan government now concurs, that the Tamil diaspora will be a significant voice contributing to the ongoing conversation about postwar reconstruction, the Tamil national question, and reconciliation on the island. The war in Sri Lanka was one of the most brutal conflicts in recent memory, and whatever opportuni-

ties existed for truth, justice, and perhaps even reconciliation have largely been squandered by the Rajapaksa regime. Minority concerns remain in the foreground and are further complicated by issues of displacement, militarization, colonization, and Sinhalization of Tamil areas, as well as a culture of impunity that pervades the island. Only time will tell whether the diaspora has a role to play in addressing these issues and whether it can indeed be an important force for transforming Sri Lanka from a postwar country into a postconflict one.

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NOTES

CHAPTER 1. *The Rise and Fall of Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka*

1. While the Sinhalese are mostly united around a shared ethnic and religious identity, there is a clear difference between the "Kandyan" (or Up-Country Sinhalese) and the Low-Country Sinhalese. The Kandyans inhabit the highlands of the south central region of Sri Lanka while the Low-Country people occupy the southern and western coastal regions. Even though much of the island was brought under colonial rule, first by the Portuguese (1505–1658) and then by the Dutch (1658–1796), the ancient Kingdom of Kandy managed to remain independent until it came under British control in 1815. Because of this, Kandyans were to some extent less "Westernized" and remained largely free of Christian influence. Even though the Kingdom of Kandy ceased to be independent after 1815, the distinction between the two communities continued. The British perpetuated the distinction between Low-Country Sinhalese and Kandyan Sinhalese and gave representation to the two groups separately. After independence in 1948, the Kandyans thought of themselves as people who were more "traditional" and as repositories of old Sinhala Buddhist customs. Even today, many Kandyans will distinguish themselves from Low-Country Sinhalese. As is evident, the distinction is both geographical and historical (see also Ross and Savada 1988; M. Hoole 1998).

2. As Dundes and Rajapaksa point out, many respondents "felt that a violent approach, such as that used by some Tamils to secure a homeland was sometimes necessary (44%), whereas only 9% supported the Tamils in this goal." However, support for both of these factors was "stronger among Tamils than the Sinhalese (68% versus 40% for using violence [$p = .015$] and 32% versus 4% for granting the Tamils a homeland [$p = .000$])" (Dundes and Rajapaksa 2004, 35).

3. There is an extensive literature on the peace process. See, for example, Sorbo et al. 2011; Goodhand, Korf, and Spencer 2011; Hoglund and Svensson 2002, 2009,; Nadarajah and Vimalarajah 2008; Palihapitiya 2007; Bouffard and Carment 2006; Moolakkattu 2005; Goodhand and Klem 2005; Hoglund 2005; Ganguly 2004; Bullion 2001; see also Anton Balasingham 2004 for the LTTE perspective.

4. For a thorough treatment of human rights violations by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government during Eelam War IV, see Human Rights Watch 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009a; ICG 2007, 2008; U.S. Department of State 2009.

CHAPTER 2. *Tamil Migration to Canada*

1. The Sri Lankan Tamil community in Canada and the South Indian community would further drift apart during the war between the LTTE and the IPKF in the late

1980s. According to some sources, another point of contention was the attempt by WTM to make inroads into South Indian organizations.

2. Sivalingam was an admired and important member of the Tamil community in Canada. Arriving in Canada in 1966, he would be credited with being one of the "founders" of the Tamil community in Canada. He died in 2010. As one of the obituaries written about him noted, after arriving in Canada, he "would go on to build a community, the Tamil community, so that all of us can embrace the great things about Canada, while, proudly, holding on to our roots and values. He was not just a pioneer; he was a community builder. Over the course of these four and a half decades, he built one institution after another, most of them standing tall today as the servants of this community and as monuments to the enduring work of Mr. Sivalingam and his peers" (Tamil Canadian 2010a).

3. The ten organizations that came together under the banner of FACT were: the World Tamil Movement, Society for the Aid of Ceylon Minorities, Tamil Eelam Society of Canada, Eelam Tamil Association of British Colombia, Eelam Tamil Association of Quebec, Tamil Coordinating Committee of Ottawa, Thamilar Oli Association Incorporated, Canadian Foundation for Tamil Refugee Rehabilitation, World Tamil Movement of Canada (Quebec), and the Senior Tamils' Centre.

CHAPTER 3. *Taking to the Streets*

1. It is generally argued that the only difference between the Tamil Eelam flag and the LTTE flag is that the former does not contain the crossed AK-47s. However, it seems that many who attended the protests used the LTTE flag to symbolize both the "Tamil nation" and the LTTE. Since the time of the ancient Chola Empire, the tiger has been used as a Tamil symbol.

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